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ABSTRACT

This publication is an edited record of a series of public seminars held between June and October of 1983. The seminars, entitled "Community Based Services for Children and Families," were based on two policy background papers commissioned by the Institute of Family Studies (ISF) on the topics of family support and children's services. The book is divided into two sections: the first section includes five commissioned papers and reports of the Institute's research. Topics covered include issues confronting the localization of services to children and families; social support and access to resources in an Australian community; and case studies of families' access to and use of support networks. Section 2 contains the papers given by politicians, government officers, and community representatives which are relevant to six states throughout Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania, Adelaide, Perth, and Darwin). Topics cover a broad range of perspectives on local concerns and approaches to community based services, social problems, and policy formation for children and families. Emphasis is placed on policies and services currently implemented in each locality. (DST)

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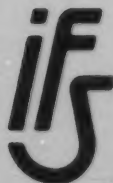


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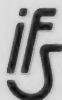
Institute of Family Studies

Community based services for children and families

edited by

**Frank Maas
Susan Sach**

Institute of Family Studies
Melbourne



Institute of Family Studies
Melbourne
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Institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne 3000 Australia
Telephone (03) 342 9100

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Foreword

The Institute of Family Studies was established under the Family Law Act 1975 and began research operations at the beginning of 1981. The Institute is a research and information dissemination organisation charged with conducting, encouraging and coordinating research into the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia. Consequently the impact of public policies on the well-being of families is a major focus of the research program.

This publication is an edited record of a series of public seminars held between June and October 1983. The seminars entitled 'Community Based Services for Children and Families', were based on two policy background papers commissioned by the Institute on the topics of Family Support Services and Children's Services. Such papers are written by leading experts in various fields and serve a number of purposes.

First, they enable specific and more general research studies to focus on important issues and on gathering appropriate data to contribute to policy development. Secondly, they serve as comprehensive and concise discussions of important policy areas without necessarily advocating any one particular set of policy prescriptions. As a result, they contribute to a more informed and enlightened debate and serve as reference points for those who wish either to contribute to or simply observe and understand the process of developing appropriate policies for families.

Synopses of the background papers were presented at each seminar by their authors, Jim Alexander, *Services to families*, and Deborah Brennan, *Towards a national child care policy*. In addition, at a number of the seminars, the first report of a study by the Institute into the use by

families of extended family and community networks was discussed by two of the researchers responsible, Peter d'Abbs and Jean McCaughey.

At each seminar the material presented by the Institute of Family Studies was responded to by senior officers of the State or Territory government and by representatives of community organisations. It was a measure of the importance of the subject that at nearly all the seminars the Minister for Community Welfare or his or her representative opened the proceedings and the head of the Community Welfare Department delivered an address in response to the Institute's presentations.

The Councils of Social Services in most places, as the peak organisations representing community agencies involved in the delivery of human services, co-sponsored the seminars along with the Government Departments of Community Welfare and provided valuable organisational and material support.

The seminars served a number of purposes. The Institute places a high priority on disseminating the results of its research activities and on encouraging public debate and criticism of these. Nearly 1000 people attended the seminars including

- workers from services such as child care, pre-school, health, social welfare, family aides, financial counselling, housing referral and Aboriginal and ethnic family support;
- interested members of the public;
- government officers and members of Parliament;
- representatives of social advocacy organisations; and
- researchers.

Over 2000 copies of the papers were distributed. This publication is part of the Institute's effort to generate discussion and feedback regarding its work.

A second objective of the seminars was to provide an opportunity for public debate on important policy issues to take place between researchers/critics, policy makers and representatives of those affected by the programs and policies under discussion. As the characteristics of community based services are largely determined by local needs and priorities, it was important to set the more general observations of the Institute's research against the particular issues confronting each State and Territory. Consequently at each seminar it was hoped that local needs and concerns could be addressed but be informed by the results of more detached research and critical analysis.

The structure of this publication groups those papers presented by IFS representatives in the first section and then those presented at each seminar in the sequence in which they were held. The seminar program is reproduced at the beginning of each State's section so as to indicate the structure of each day. In some cases not all of the presentations were able to be reproduced.

The presentations by Institute representatives are synopses of the Policy Background Papers. These may be obtained from the Distribution Officer, Family Information Centre, Institute of Family Studies, 766

Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000. They are: *Services to families, with many a slip*, by Jim Alexander; *Towards a national child care policy*, by Deborah Brennan; and *Social support in an Australian community*, by Des Storer, Arthur Faulkner and Jean McCaughey.

Don Edgar
Director
Institute of Family Studies
December 1984

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In order to mount a series of six seminars, some only a week apart, spread all around Australia and to ensure the participation of senior officials and representative audiences, the cooperation and assistance of a great many people is essential. The Institute recognises and wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the following people and to express the appreciation of the Institute's staff for the efforts of those who helped in each State:

- Sydney** Ann Symonds, MLC, representing Mr F. Walker, Minister for Youth and Community Services (YACS)
Bill Langshaw, Director General, YACS
Eva Byrne, Family and Children's Services Agency
John Humphries, YACS
Jill Sutton, NSW Council of Social Service
Brian McGahen, Social Welfare Workers' Union
Barbara Lepani
Anne Whaite
- Melbourne** Meredith Sussex, Acting Assistant Director General, Department of Community Welfare Services (DCWS)
Bev Long
Colin Kent
Hayden Raysmith, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
Di Paterson, DCWS
John Dickson, VCOSS
- Hobart** The Hon. John Cleary, MP, Minister for Community Welfare and the Elderly

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Dennis Daniels, Director, Department of Community Welfare
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 Truda Korber, Savage River Neighbourhood House
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 Fonda Arnold, Tasmanian Council of Social Service
 Mary Murnane, Department of Community Welfare

Adelaide The Hon. Greg Crafter, MP, Minister for Community Welfare
 Ian Cox, Director-General, Department for Community Welfare
 Sheila Hall, Para-Districts Counselling Service
 Janet Luxton, SA Association of Subsidised Childcare Services
 Ann Prior, Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services
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 Frank Althuzen, Department for Community Welfare
 Brian Jones, Department for Community Welfare
 Lange Powell, SA Council for Social Service

Perth The Hon. Keith Wilson, MLA, Minister for Youth and Community Services, Housing and Minister with Special Responsibilities for Aboriginal Affairs
 Keith Maine, Director, Department for Community Welfare
 Terri Coughlin, Western Australian Institute of Technology
 Carey Drake-Brockman, Fremantle One-Parent Centre
 Chris Chapple
 Ann Bartlett, WA Council for Social Service
 Fred Robinson, Department for Community Welfare

Darwin The Hon. Ian Tuxworth, Minister for Community Development
 Bruce Alcorn, Director, Community Welfare Division, Department of Community Development
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 Yvonne Monaghan

The IFS staff who were responsible for the organisation of the series of seminars were Frank Maas, David Keane, Cath McConville, Peter Good, Fay Lewis and Simon Freidin.

SECTION 1

Commissioned papers and reports
of the Institute's research.

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families

FRANK MAAS*

Part of the charter of the Institute of Family Studies is to identify and examine those factors which contribute to family well-being in Australia. Consequently, we are concerned with the social and economic factors that affect the well-being of families and with the policies and programs that governments develop which in part determine the environment in which families have to operate. In turn, changes in families themselves will have an impact upon the problems and issues with which governments, and other groups in society, have to contend. Increasingly it is clear in most countries that while governments may express great concern for the well-being of families, the policies they implement are often at considerable odds with the rhetoric they espouse.

The major changes evident in the nature of families are as follows:

- a high rate of marriage in the post-war decades which has been one important contributing factor to a high rate of divorce;
- concomitantly, a significant increase in the number of one-parent families which now comprise 13 per cent of all families with dependent children;
- an increasing incidence of remarriage, which means that children in particular have become part of more complex family arrangements than the stereotyped 'nuclear' family of two parents and two children, so beloved of television script writers and framers of much government policy;
- a decrease in the number of children in most marriages now numbering no more than two, born later in the marriage and closer together, so that the whole episode is over very early in the life of an average

marriage, providing far greater opportunities to pursue interests outside the home, particularly for women; and

- an increasing number of married women employed in the paid labour market.

Those social and economic factors which have had most impact on the well-being of families include:

- structural and cyclical changes in the labour market which have generated unemployment and uncertainty about the future;
- a lack of government commitment to provide adequate levels of income security, thereby contributing to a greatly increased group of low income families;
- a running down of publicly provided social services, especially in the areas of housing, transport, health, education and child care; and
- a worsening environment of high costs, especially for housing.

It is partly for these reasons that interest has grown in policy which specifically addresses the needs of families. Relevant policy areas encompass broad issues such as employment, taxation and income security, housing and health. A focus on families has also been increasingly characteristic of the development of human service provision at community or local level.

Community based services

The Institute has focused this series of seminars on community involvement in the design and delivery of services. While not ignoring the importance of policy development at the national level, we consider it vitally important to address the many issues that have arisen as a result of the increased emphasis on community based services and to examine their inter-relationship with and importance for both those broader policy areas and the well-being of families. For these reasons we undertook our own research into the patterns of assistance that families actually seek out when necessary. We also commissioned Jim Alexander to write a background paper on Family Support Services and Deborah Brennan to write on Children's Services.

What resources do families use?

In a survey of 416 families in the Victorian provincial city of Geelong, the Institute set out to discover which people have family networks, whether those networks offer support to their members and the extent to which outside assistance is available and used. We wanted to test the often expressed view that families did not look after their own. Behind this view is the belief that families can and should stand alone, taking responsibility for everything that happens to their members and not rely on support from other than private sources. Extending this view, it

becomes possible to blame families and/or individual members for difficulties that befall them and not the economic and social conditions that have actually generated some particular level of need.

The Institute's survey found that families are in need of assistance in many areas of their functioning and that, for help in matters beyond the resources of family and friends, such as unemployment, treatment of illness and income maintenance, families utilise those professional and government services available to them. For more immediate or personal needs they relied more on family and friends, sometimes supplementing these with specialist help when situations had become too difficult for the resources of informal sources of support to cope. Even when venturing beyond these informal networks, families indicated a preference for those contexts with which they are familiar, such as health centres, schools and clubs.

Consequently, it would seem that our early findings support the policy developments of recent years which have increasingly stressed the importance of shifting government service provision away from centralised controlling agencies and which emphasised communities as the focus for service delivery. Indeed the call for communities and non-government agencies and families to participate in the meeting of welfare needs has become increasingly insistent and, it seems, heeded. Along with this move to base services within the community, there has been an increased emphasis on the development of personalised services to both individuals and to families.

Positive outcomes of focus on communities

It is to be hoped that these two trends have the following outcomes:

- that services are sensitive to particular needs of the communities in which they are located;
- that the many services provided become part of an integrated and comprehensive system within the local area;
- that access to such services contributes to the alleviation of social inequality and to the enhancement of opportunities for individuals and families with few resources;
- that those whose needs are greater, or in some way requiring extra or specialist resources, are able to be assisted without being stigmatised or losing their independence;
- that provision of localised services is planned in such a way as to ensure high priority to areas requiring greatest assistance.

Some critical notes

If these potential outcomes were to be realised the well-being of many of the families now experiencing great difficulties would be enhanced. There is also a need to focus on potentially adverse outcomes of the current trend towards community based services. As with all policy developments there are unintended effects as well as alternative out-

comes which, intended or not, are hidden by the rhetoric that invariably surrounds any government program.

While the Institute regards the development of services at the local level as a positive step, it sees the following issues as ones to be faced if the benefits to communities are not to be outweighed by greater social costs.

Shifting costs away from governments

It has been a tendency for governments in recent times to evoke some ill-defined bygone era when families made few or no calls on government funds for assistance. The family has now been called on to lighten the load of the public in providing for the young, the sick and disabled, the old, the unemployed and the poor. These pleas have continued despite lack of evidence that any such happy state ever existed, at least to the extent the mythology has asserted, and despite the clear evidence that not all families have the same capacity to absorb and survive the many blows and stresses that beset them currently. The net effect of such an emphasis, and the policies that have accompanied it, has been to shift the burden of care away from the broader community through government resources, onto the private sphere of families or other agencies. In particular, as feminist critics have accurately observed, the burden has been taken by an invisible army of unpaid women.

A similar, and closely related, outcome could result from a call for communities to help themselves and to rely less on central government services. In this way, by privatising the cost of services, governments can increasingly concentrate the cost of assisting individuals and families on those communities with greatest need rather than distributing the responsibility across the whole of society via the expenditure of government revenues.

Increasingly scarce resources

There are few community based services today that are regarded as being adequately resourced. Over recent years initial allocations have been eroded by non-indexation and by increased demand due to deteriorating economic conditions. In particular the Commonwealth government has condoned the low level of provision by claiming its role was one of merely supplementing State or local resources. The effect has been to draw increasingly on those very sources to attempt to maintain adequate levels of service.

Crisis overwhelming prevention

A further outcome of the limitation on resources has been that service providers have had to carry out their tasks in ways other than those they would have preferred. Rather than deal with emergency cases when and as they arise, welfare workers have sought to develop policies which prevent families getting to crisis situations. These 'developmental' or 'preventive' approaches underpinned the Family Support Scheme in

that they were intended to prevent children being taken into institutionalised care by provision of support to families. However, the lack of resources characteristic of such services has meant that crisis cases had to be given highest priority leaving little time, money or energy for any developmental work. It is extremely difficult for any group to work both at preventive solutions and at attending to emergency cases. The extent to which this does occur, for example in the housing referral area, is a tribute to the immense personal efforts of workers and is therefore only possible at a high level of privatised cost.

Labelling of those in need

With scarce resources and an emphasis on crisis prevention, rationing procedures become inevitable. As a result, only people who fit certain categories become eligible for assistance and thus become labelled and possibly stigmatised. Additionally, their own self-esteem and control of their lives are inevitably diminished. A further concern resulting from an emphasis on controlling such services locally is the extent to which groups with really difficult problems can adequately be accommodated by local resources. For example, few communities are able to gather sufficient resources of enthusiasm to meet the needs of prostitutes, alcoholics, or drug addicts in their midst.

Diversion of scrutiny of government activity

These potential ways of ensuring social control make it possible for governments to reduce scrutiny of their own efforts to address basic social needs by encouragement of competition for scarce funds by localised groups. Where community organisations have been able to see beyond immediate or local needs and join together to develop a coordinated set of demands, this outcome has been largely avoided, but where groups are overwhelmed by the constant round of submissions and representations merely to maintain an often meagre level of funding for their operation, there may be little time left to consider needs outside their own.

Lack of planning

An emphasis on local groups identifying their own needs and the necessary levels of resources to meet them has in some places led to a distribution of funds that in no way reflects the overall pattern of need in the broader community. While these unfortunate distributional effects, arising from the so-called 'submission-funding' model, have been recognised by some organisers in recent times and some attempts to develop more objective planning procedures have begun, the problem still to be faced is that of providing for communities with poorly developed networks lacking both cohesion and organisational resources.

Limits of personalised services

The concentration on personalised services at the local level may also have the outcome of directing attention from needs in the more funda-

mental policy areas of employment, income security, health and housing. The limitations of such personalised services must be recognised. Financial counselling cannot make up for a fundamental lack of income any more than accommodation referral services can produce more houses. It can be seen as something of a paradox for governments to be supporting the development of personalised services to individuals and families at local levels while ignoring the impact on communities and families of inadequate policy development in areas of economic management and provision of basic services such as housing, income support and pensions.

Summary of concerns

In summary, alongside the potential for positively assisting families through the provision of community based services, there are some potentially damaging outcomes which must be recognised and efforts made to avoid. These include:

- the shifting of costs of care on to the private sphere of families and communities;
- the concentration of these costs on vulnerable groups, especially low income families and women, both within families and within communities;
- the fragmentation of services and their distribution which do not account properly for need;
- the avoidance of resolution of more fundamental policy issues in the areas of economic management, income security, housing, etc; and
- the swamping of preventive approaches by the need for crisis alleviation.

Shared responsibility

By raising these issues, the Institute hopes that the move towards increasing community participation in the design and development of services to families is strengthened. We are of the view that a balance must be struck between the informal networks of family and community support and the more formal social services provided by State and Commonwealth authorities. The long term hope is that individuals and families would have available to them those services they themselves decide they need to use. The underlying principle should be one of increasing the choices people have. Specialist resources should be provided as back-ups to readily available general services. The crucial task, and one which will probably vary from community to community, is to find the most appropriate mix of formal and informal services. In this way families, communities and governments may share the responsibility of providing support.

Services to families — with many a slip

JIM ALEXANDER*

I want to say from the outset, that with Zaretsky I say: ties of sexuality, kinship, biological and psychological dependence are inevitable and I'm for finding ways that those ties which sustain and enhance can be cherished and protected, but I'm for breaking those ties to dreams that have turned into nightmares and to the burden of unrealistic and unjust expectations based on families to be all-sufficient regardless of the level of sufficiency provided them. I am not with someone like Shulamith Firestone who calls for the replacement of childbirth and nurturing outside the family, but for changes to patterns of family organisations that allow for greater flexibility in a shared distribution of responsibilities and work within the family, as well as a shared responsibility by the community for a just provision for all families.

The paper starts with ways of looking at families — drawing implications about the ways policies are framed and services are organised, and it looks at the slips that come from speaking about families as if they are all the same, when families have as much different as they have in common. So to use the word 'family' without recognising all of these differences risks missing the point, and the differences are getting wider all the time. Not only in the ways families are being organized but in the level of resources that families have available to them.

* Jim Alexander has written widely in the area of service provision particularly for families and children. For the past five years he has been the principal researcher with Social Research and Evaluation Ltd in Sydney, completing numerous projects in the area of family and children's services. Previously Jim has taught Sociology of Education, Educational Psychology and Child Development at Macquarie University. He has also undertaken research into early childhood services for the Bernard van Leer Foundation of The Hague. He has recently taken up a position as a policy analyst with the NSW Health Department.

Confusion may have characterised the rapid changes in patterns of family formation but the dependence of women, especially those with young children, has not changed very much. The traditional prime responsibility for the family has consistently constrained their work-force participation and the independence that comes with that. Traditional sexual divisions may have avoided confusion in role expectations but they also assigned to women the positions of dependence and vulnerability. It is therefore women who must fall back on other means of support when expectations fail. Services to families, then, under this traditional division are really services to women which assist not only in maintaining family units but also in maintaining women in their domestic, dependent roles. So not only does the word 'family' obscure differences *between* families but it also obscures some of the divisions *within* them. Left to itself, the individual family is supposedly free from the interference of an overbearing state, responsible only to itself and therefore motivated to strive for the satisfaction and pride to be had from individual achievement. Yet the experience of individuality is essentially a contradictory one — of autonomy, power, pride and responsibility on the one hand, and of aggression, helplessness, frustration, failure and apathy on the other. For the role of the state in the provision of welfare services is not simply straightforward. Its intervention has often been experienced as interference too. The ways in which the state chooses not to act, is also sometimes just as telling as the way it does.

The second section of the paper looks at the social provisions of the state and argues that while there is a need for shared responsibility, a look back at the way sharing between the state and the family has been done should issue us with some warnings.

The rationale for the Family Support Services Scheme, for example, projects an intervention by the state on behalf of families, claiming that its services will enhance family well-being. And at first glance, such intervention may seem to be self-evidently good, given the familial basis of our society. But the conventional form of a private, self-supporting, nuclear unit is not inevitable or equitable or even safe sometimes, and supports for the family in this sense perpetuate problems as much as contribute towards their solution. Especially in times of economic recession, traditional family dependencies can be revived to cover the containment in public expenditure. The allocation of funds by the state for personal, family, welfare services hardly compensates for a poverty level income, nor do the meagre increases in income transfers to women and children compensate for the effects of cutbacks in government spending on universal service provisions such as housing, health, child care and so on. Families thus become the new location for redistribution within themselves, retaining women and children in their dependency and maintaining class inequalities.

Patricia Tulloch says poorer families are both heavily affected by workforce exclusion and they are the least able to provide economic support for their members during periods of dependency. Their enforced reliance on the public welfare system provides a focal point for

claims of failure, reaffirms their illegitimate dependency and proclaims their inability to survive through the market or with family support. Don Edgar says families have different capacities to absorb responsibilities and to tolerate dependencies. Families are different and families are unequal. Pressure to absorb responsibilities is, however, despite these differences, uniformly strong. Senator Chaney, the Federal Minister for Social Security during the last Liberal government, bemoaned the trend towards an increasing dependence on the state to provide services and welfare payments, and a declining personal responsibility in these areas. But personal responsibility rests on certain presumptions: that responsibility is justly attributed to individuals and that individuals have the opportunity and the capacity to accept such a just responsibility. This notion presumes equity and some efficiency in the sexual division of labour, that is, women's at-home work, child care and maintenance of a supportive community for no wages, and men's continuous full-time, out-of-home work for wages to be responsible, and any other arrangements irresponsible. Further Chaney says: 'To say that my personal preference would be to see a higher level of personal independence and family interdependence is perhaps to express a hopeful view. There will be those in the community who will maintain this kind of pattern with young people living at home and receiving support from their families, with husbands and wives recognizing their obligations of mutual support, with families committing themselves to the care of their aged members and parents accepting their primary responsibility for the care of their own children.'

Such a hopelessly inaccurate understanding of how so many families are constituted and endowed, is little more than nostalgia which takes absolutely no notice of the presently unemployed, the already inadequately housed or on stretched, low incomes, preferring rather a little more crowding and over stretching. These can only be preferences for ideal families and as Margot Moore says: 'Paradoxically, the ideal family is not accessible to most without the involvement of women in paid work.'

The substantial issue for personal family services, then, is whether they do help redress inequalities, or are merely sops in place of more decisive social services and policies such as income transfers; income maintenance; housing, health, child care services and so on.

The risk of personal services to families is that not only will differences *between* family groups remain unchanged, but so too the differences *within* them. Worse, their personal orientation may serve to reinforce the differences. Bettina Cass outlines a whole set of criteria which she used to evaluate any sort of welfare provision to see whether it did avoid the worst of those problems.

The third section of the paper is a skip through the history of the state's involvement in services to families, and it concludes that there have been extensions and flexibility in the provision of financial assistance to families (the Commonwealth government's responsibility) which simply have not benefited poor families. The Institute has recent-

ly published an elaborate report by Peter Saunders on income tax transfers showing, for example, how both direct benefits and taxation allowances have advantaged high income males with dependent spouses and dependent children through the dependent spouse rebate, child endowment benefits and special tax concessions. Last year we used up more than \$800m on the dependent spouse rebate and the Commonwealth allocated in the same period a little over \$80m for childcare. Most recipients of the dependent spouse rebate don't have dependent children. Yet eligibility criteria for these allowances have the proposed intention of supporting family well-being. The state however, does adopt a benevolence towards some families for taxation and other advantages, favouring appropriate nuptial, work and domestic arrangements. De facto relationships and others are not eligible.

While in many conspicuous ways services have over the years become better; certainly now children no longer have their ears lopped for transgressing the rules of an orphanage and single pregnant women no longer have their heads shaved and painted with gentian violet, the diseased are no longer locked up with the deranged — glaring inequity still persists within gender, race and class divisions. Yvonne Taylor-Cullen says: 'Everyday life is teeming with assumptions like "things are getting better"'. These notions on progress are widely held and believed in when often they contain little more than a few grains of truth.'

The fourth section of the paper is a discussion of the Family Support Services Scheme. The report of the Family Services Committee, the Coleman Report in 1978, made convincing argument for increased social responsibility for families facing difficult situations or crises, often quite outside their own control and beyond their capacity to cope. In accepting this responsibility, recommendations were made only in terms of personal supports to vulnerable families and to those with special needs. Although the limitations of personal services were acknowledged early in the report, the suggested services, however well intended, were no match for the breakdown of the most basic social supports. There is then something of a paradox in the concern of the committee for the well-being of families and the direction of other government policies. While careful attention was (properly) being paid to the organisation of personal welfare services for families, policies in the primary areas of employment, taxation, benefit pensions, housing and health, were making critical impacts on those same families. It was as if personal supports could somehow compensate.

As unemployment and inflation levels soared, pensions and benefits remained fixed and public spending on housing, health and so on was curtailed. This had the effect of concentrating the destructiveness of the recession onto an already poor and increasing number of vulnerable families. No relief was afforded pay-as-you-earn taxpayers, nor were the additional costs for dependent children allowed for. Yet taxation avoidance practices by some others abounded. Such conditions typically called for welfare intervention, but not obviously for personal, family services.

Under the rubric of 'family services' were collected a gamut of service types, philosophies, auspices, funding and administrative methods and the issues those bring in tow. The pilot Family Support Services Scheme from 1978 to 1981 funded by the Commonwealth government variously in all States and Territories is the most substantial recent program. The Family Support Scheme has gathered the most disparate elements together under the rhetoric of the family. Trudy Wise has commented that the focus of State family welfare policies has been traditionally on children alone and services have been directed exclusively to children in the form of residential care away from the family. Apart from the anomaly of family policies abetting the *disintegration* of families, evidence about the negative impacts on children of separation and institutional practices forced the reconsideration of maintaining children with their parents and by providing support for them in their childcare tasks or through the provision of material assistance.

The Committee of Enquiry into Childcare Services in Victoria in July 1976 recommended the provision of accessible preventative services to assist parents to maintain their children, and the need for an integrated welfare policy for children and their parents — a family welfare policy, rather than a dislocation that resulted from an isolated child welfare policy. By late 1976, the Victorian Department of Social Services was providing or funding three types of services: emergency accommodation, financial counselling and family aide or homemaker services, which could be considered family support services. The provision of these services became its policy *de facto* and as Victoria started it all, that became the policy *de facto* for the nation as a whole, so that family services were defined conveniently as those that had already been funded under that name. Important, however, was the strong de-institutionalisation push and the consequences of this especially for voluntary residential care institutions.

Previously, under the Australian Assistance Plan, community based activities and services were Cinderella to the ugly institutional step sisters. Faced with the high cost of their traditions, these organizations sought funds first through the Alternatives to Residential Care program, then through the Family Support Services Scheme, and this fixed one parameter of the new program — alternatives to costly and dislocating residential care programs. But small and uncertain recurrent grants were not sufficient inducements for many established agencies to forsake either their capital or ideological investment in property. At most, outreach-type programs, like family or homemaker services were considered but more as complementing, scaled down, revamped residential programs than as real substitutes for them.

While the original impetus from Victoria shaped both the content and style of the Family Support Services Scheme, sufficient flexibility was allowed the other States and Territories to innovate in their own ways, subject of course always to the Commonwealth's approval; and they did. What emerged could hardly be called a national scheme. Coupled with the submission funding model, almost anything went. The tight

though restrictive Victorian model was quite different from the attempts elsewhere. It was premised on a decentralised set of relatively well integrated services: emergency accommodation, financial counselling and family aid services and an already established regional infrastructure.

The Family Support Services Scheme was proposed as a complement to traditional institutional services through its preventive role with services to avoid family breakdown and institutionalisation of children. The weakness though of the preventive notion is indicated by the conjunction with priorities to be accorded families in crisis. The difficulty in organising alternatives to institutionalisation alone would have been more than enough to keep most primary welfare services going, let alone a voluntary based, community-managed one with the additional tasks of supporting families with special needs.

In practice, as the conflict in health systems has already shown, these basic goals, prevention or crisis intervention, are contradictory rather than complementary. Either the service will aim to be preventative with a developmental focus, which depends upon crisis services being otherwise provided, or it necessarily must substitute for them. With such a muddle of demanding requirements as innovation, prevention, crisis intervention, developmental enhancement, and such sweeping contexts as families in general and Aboriginal and migrant groups in particular, the general aims of the program offer everything to everyone (and this is not surprising given the variability of the submission funding model).

Particular characteristics of the scheme were elaborated. The first of these required services to be developed as alternatives to more traditional and costly programs of residential care for children. Services were also to be discriminatory and categorical, that is, related to the needs of particular groups, and to be locally or regionally administered and provided by the non-government sector, supposedly because they were largely unencumbered by legislative restrictions and could therefore diversify more easily into new areas of need. Lois Bryson and Martin Mowbray have commented that although responsiveness and flexibility may have been claims of and for the non-government sector, such claims are certainly not always borne out. In comparison with state-run service programs, non-government alternatives are often characterised in much the same way. There is no particular evidence that the non-government sector is differently encumbered. It is the case, however, that the non-government sector is dependent on unpaid volunteers and under-paid labour and community facilities which may need no capital funding but tolerate sharing, crowding and the like. This prepares an appropriate setting for the ideology and practice of self help. Combined with a hope for the cooperation of local government, the way is paved for the full disaster of localism.

In times of recession, the retreat by governments to community based services marks not only a small government, containment strategy, but coalesces with populist notions of localism and self help which can be simplistic, ad hoc responses to the complex issues of social change in

modern societies. The concepts of 'community' in such societies are both intangible and paradoxical, incorporating both paternalistic and libertarian notions of social processes. Whereas the appeal to local demand and action rests on assumptions such as neighbourhood altruism, consensus and capability, community strategies also confront indifference, intolerance, conflict, incompetence and incapacity. (This is not to imply any exemptions for centralised systems from such problems, but to argue for realistic rather than opportunistic assessments of the capacity of merely local arrangements to be handed responsibility with little control.) In no sense could the guidelines produced by the Commonwealth be seen to be appropriate for developing services which would lead in any direct way to innovative alternatives to residential care. The guidelines were aimed at more general provision of community information, referral, accommodation, parent support and children's services and were only peripherally relevant to institutionalisation. There was no serious effort to plan and fund community or children's services as preventive alternatives in their own right. It seems that the romance of local, community based, participatory, self-help, innovative, preventative ideas had at that time an ascendancy which obscured the reality of a number of children already in residential or substitute care and the many more who would be during the time of this scheme.

The paper then goes on to discuss a number of the different sorts of programs.

The predominance and the costs of homemaker, family work projects throughout Australia is some indication of their centrality to a concept of family support. However, they are the very ones that are furthest from the progressive ideal of universal community services and they still smack somewhat of the residual (tertiary) intervention that we are all hastily trying to retreat from. In order to counter such a charge a critique of practical (rather than therapeutic) discreet and categorical rather than multi-problem services has emerged. While the practical, preventive orientation of the scheme may widen the parameters of eligibility and catch those missed by primary services, the Family Support Services Scheme may not be sufficient to redress the problematic histories of some families for whom, like it or not, more sustained and more emotional support may be necessary. Further, with the pressure to deinstitutionalise coinciding with reduced funding for community health and welfare programs, heavy demands to accept increased responsibility are being placed on family aides and family workers both by families themselves and by other health and welfare workers.

While the regressive connotations of tertiary intervention cannot be escaped, neither can the pressure of service demand be ignored. A service focused on poor women at home with their children can both fall prey to individualistic understandings of their problems and offer solutions that are little more than maintenance or rehabilitation props. Ways out of this residual trap can be found. The alternative strategies developed by some women's housing and health groups provide a few clues

and so do some family aid homemaker projects themselves. Some of these groups have rejected the maintenance props of information, support and role modelling and work differently to do more than reorganise domestic arrangements by aiming instead for reformation. So rather than tolerate the isolation of being at home alone, these groups have constructed alternatives away from the very home base that others would have them cope with. Rather than teach parenting skills, they organised childcare; rather than homemaking skills, they organised job training or tried to find paid work outside the home; rather than encouraging a dependent compliance, they supported some degree of assertion and felt they got somewhere — so far, in fact, that in some projects the turnover of ex-clients become volunteers who left to take on paid employment, disrupted the efficiency of services.

More common, however, was the family aid worker busying herself with the servicing of mothers in need, keeping them keeping on, providing little relief, but encouraging them in the values and practices of a better kept house. Many women clung on faithfully. Others resisted. Getting out of their homemaking roles was the first step in acknowledging their dissatisfaction with simply mothering on. They felt unfairly left alone to cope. But the supportive social contexts offered by some services, penetrated the inconsistencies and injustices of a sexual division of labour which had frustrated them.

In relation to other service types, financial counselling for example, developmental activities such as information advocacy and legal advice can be contrasted with the minutiae of budgeting advice. The auspice of the service and its degree of integration with other services affects its location along the remedial-developmental continuum. At the remedial end, financial counselling looks to be little more than help with the belt tightening that poor families have always faced and which is sometimes little more than a sop to financial institutions. (In fact in my investigations, I located at least one financial counselling agency that depended for its financial support on a conglomerate of debt collection agencies.) This raises a number of social and political issues about funding financial counselling of community welfare services at all. At the developmental end, the activities can be a significant part of more comprehensive assistance to people on low incomes, or further help to alter the very conditions which place people in financial jeopardy in the first place, such as consumer protection activities.

In any one of the types under the Family Support Services Scheme, the limits of personal welfare services must always be faced. Emergency accommodation and housing information services, for example, make the point. Welfare issues are substantially different from housing issues, although they are closely bound, and must not confuse the conditions necessary for the resolution of the housing issues themselves. So information about the housing system and assistance in managing that system can reduce the inequality suffered. However, while it can promote access to housing resources, the housing information service cannot solve housing problems where the solution lies in other kinds of

resources. Information about eligibility may increase the chances of a low income family gaining access to public housing, but if there is not sufficient low cost housing available for all those who need it, information is not the answer. A higher investment in public housing is needed. Information and advice centres cannot increase what is not there, or themselves break down discriminatory barriers against the poor, the sick and the disadvantaged.

The history of state intervention into the lives of families has always been problematic. On the one hand there is the tradition of heavy handedness, and on the other, of neglect and abnegation. In the current cost-efficient scramble for de-institutionalisation, another possibility looms. Switching to smaller, community based alternatives avoids the worst of institutional regulations. If economies are not born locally or responsibilities transferred back to unassisted families, and if local control does not degenerate into parochial control, and if service planning and development do not become dissipated and uncoordinated, there must be an acceptance of a responsibility for the ongoing need for support to some people. That same self-help motivation that is pushing aside the patronising and inflexible practices of the past can degenerate into little more than individual responsibility again, which brings us back to the beginning: the risk of slipping back to the inequitable burden of individual and family responsibility depending upon the unequal capacity of different families to cope and the further unequal responsibilities within those families upon women.

The anomalous use of the word 'family' as a service description for eligibility criteria should be discarded, because it neither specifically targets any particular group nor indicates what services are being offered. That the word 'family' has been used to describe services as diverse as legal advice in relation to financial issues for an aged widow, weekend play groups for children of single fathers and intensive personal support to psychiatric patients or to parents of children who have already been institutionalised, is evidence of its rhetorical rather than its explanatory power.

Certainly there have been strong indications of need for, and benefit from, the range of services provided under the scheme. No arguments have been advanced here for priorities or effectiveness. Rather, the anomalies and limitations of personal welfare support to families have been examined. The special needs of particular groups will require additional planning and additional resources and should not be off-loaded onto generalised services disrupting their programs and depleting their resources even further. Those special programs should be coordinated wherever possible with general ones. But the responsibility for intensive and ongoing assistance to some people cannot be abnegated in the name of 'community support' or worse, 'self help'. Similarly, the competing demands of crisis intervention and prevention will not be resolved because of a preference for developmental programs. Residual problems still face us. Nor will alternatives to residential care simply emerge from general children's community services. Alternatives need

to be integrated with such services but require additional resources and quite specific service, administrative and accountability provisions.

Whether as a haven in a heartless world or a site of oppression and inequality, the failures of the family can be neither understood nor overcome by adopting a position which simply relies upon individual independence. The role of the state and its general social policies has crucial implications for shaping conditions under which families function and the level of their material resources. Similarly, the organisation and provision of personal welfare mostly confirms the tradition of household arrangements that places onto women the burden of responsibility for care both within the family and the wider community.

To sustain the functions which families perform, the Commonwealth and State governments have a joint responsibility to develop a complementary set of universal and particular social services. The ways that these are arranged can influence the equity both between families and within them.

Children's services

DEBORAH BRENNAN*

I would like to open the discussion on child care by linking this issue with some of the things Jim Alexander has said about the political uses of the term 'family' and extending his comments to the equally vague and ideologically loaded concept of 'community'.

An argument frequently raised by those who oppose the public provision of child care is that this should be the responsibility of the family — by which they mean that women should stay at home and do the job. In a similar way, governments wishing to avoid the significant costs associated with providing a basic system of children's services invoke the notion of 'community' and claim that their concern to avoid stifling local initiative and their desire to foster community development is the reason that they avoid planning and funding an equitable level of children's services.

In a recent paper on trends in social policy Martin Mowbray has stated that since the onset of the economic recession

Central governments at State and Federal levels have gradually withdrawn support from . . . direct services, and from concern for comprehensive social planning. At the same time there has been an upsurge in emphasis on minimally funded programs designed to utilise existing resources and mobilise cheap labour. There has been a commensurate increase in rhetoric about self-reliance and self-sufficiency and enthusiastic revitalisation of concern for self-help.

* Deborah Brennan has published in the area of children's services, most recently completing a review of Commonwealth and State policies from 1972 to 1982. She has worked as a consultant with Social Research and Evaluation Ltd in Sydney and tutors in the Departments of Government and Social Work at Sydney University.

Later on he makes the point that the term

'community' through its ambiguity, is well suited for confirming traditional sex roles — through camouflaging the fact that community programs are commonly dependent for their viability and popularity on the 'cheap' labour of women.

I believe that these comments apply with great force to the area of child care and I would like to explain this by looking in more detail at three particular areas:

- the submission model of funding,
- cutbacks in Federal government expenditure, and
- the increasing reliance of governments on unpaid or extremely low paid labour.

Before doing this, however, I would like to put these issues in a clearer context by briefly discussing the extent of child care needs in Australia today and the current level of provision.

Very few children in Australia have access to organised child care services. A survey carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1980 showed that only 5.5 per cent of children below school age use either day care centres or family day care schemes as their main form of care. This figure includes children attending commercial centres. Of the 5.5 per cent, an informed estimate suggests that about two thirds are in Commonwealth sponsored services — which represents about 3.5 per cent of children not yet at school. A further 12.5 per cent use pre-schools, giving a total of 18 per cent of children in the age group 0-5 who use formal services as their main form of care.

Compared with other similar countries this is a quite extraordinarily low level of public provision. In spite of the dearth of formal child care facilities over one third of the mothers of pre-schoolers are in the labour force. This means that around 300 000 children have both their parents (or their sole parent) at work. Approximately 100 000 of these children are the responsibility of parents who are in full-time employment. In addition to this, a study of discouraged workers in 1981 revealed that 120 000 women would like a job if child care were available. Incidentally, because of the lack of child care provision these women were not actively seeking work and therefore they are not counted as unemployed in official statistics.

While figures relating to parental employment provide an obvious and measurable index of the need for child care I would not like to suggest that it is the only reason why this service is required or desired. People seek access to child care for a wide variety of reasons: they may, for example, need time to study or retrain, to learn English or to pursue a particular interest or hobby. Many mothers whose major occupation is looking after their small children and caring for a home simply need a break and some time to themselves. As well as all these adult-centred reasons, many parents seek access to child care because of the benefits it provides for children. The opportunity for children to mix with others and to develop social skills is highly valued by most parents and many

also wish their children to meet and form attachments to adults outside the immediate family.

Having sketched in a few of the facts and figures behind the child care debate I would now like to return to the three concerns I mentioned earlier, starting with the submission model of funding.

The new Federal Labor government is committed to allocating funds for child care on the basis of need rather than on the basis of submissions from the public and the NSW Labor government has also made some moves towards the planned provision of services in the western suburbs of Sydney. Nevertheless I think the issue is still worth raising since it has, to date, been a fundamental aspect of both governments' approach to children's services, and it is still a very common way of allocating funds in the welfare field.

Ever since Commonwealth funds for children's services became available in 1973, allocations have been made solely in response to submissions from local groups. No Commonwealth government has ever accepted responsibility for initiating services, nor has there been any attempt at the Federal level to plan services on the basis of demographic information. As I mentioned, the new government in Canberra is committed to implementing a planning model, but we have yet to see how this will operate.

The submissions model has been criticised on three main grounds. First, in a wealthy society such as Australia, it is entirely inappropriate for child care funding — just as it would be unacceptable if they had to compete for funds for schools, hospitals or any other basic service. Secondly, funding on the basis of submissions has led to a grossly inequitable distribution of services. Areas with high proportions of migrants, working mothers and low income families have been particularly disadvantaged. In the case of New South Wales this pattern has been very clearly documented in the study published by the Council of Social Service entitled *Scarce for Kids*, which shows that over half the local government areas in this State have absolutely no provision for long day care. And thirdly, not only are services inequitably distributed in a geographical sense; there is also a marked bias in the *kinds* of services which have been developed.

The submission model of funding is closely bound up with the philosophy of 'allowing communities to express their own needs' — a bland phrase which completely glosses over the fact that so-called communities, or rather the people living within them, having different, often conflicting, needs. Inevitably within each locality some voices will be raised more loudly than others and what comes to be described as the expression of community need is more likely to be the needs of those who have the time and the energy to attend meetings, answer questionnaires and become involved in local committees. The fact that across Australia we have nearly four and a half thousand pre-schools but only five hundred day care centres illustrates this point rather clearly.

The rhetoric of community responsibility for social needs, and the desire of governments to restrict welfare expenditure to those whom it decrees are truly needy has also been the basis for significant cutbacks in

expenditure on child care. Throughout the years of the Fraser government funds were reduced quite relentlessly. The current annual Federal budget for children's services is about \$100 million. This amount covers pre-schools, day care centres, family day care schemes, before and after school care services and family support across the country.

To put this expenditure figure in perspective, it is worth recalling that in 1974 the Social Welfare Commission recommended that in order to enable 38 per cent of children to have access to services by 1980 some \$885 million would have to be spent between 1974 and 1980. We have become so accustomed to thinking small when it comes to child care that the idea of spending \$885 million over a 7 year period probably sounds quite unrealistic (and in actual fact less than half that amount was spent over the period), yet every year we spend *more* than that on the Dependent Spouse Rebate!

I would like now to discuss some of the industrial consequences of the emphasis on self-help and community care in children's services.

The industrial conditions of workers in community based children's services are largely determined by the level of government subsidies. Inadequate funding means low pay and poor working conditions for the staff and this in turn has repercussions for the children in care. The vast majority of workers in the child care field are women; their level of unionisation is low and in the past many have been reluctant to organise to improve their conditions. This situation is beginning to change now and there is a growing realisation among child care workers that industrial issues are closely linked with issues of quality of care and access to care.

When services are underfunded workers may not even be able to receive their award wages and entitlements. In New South Wales community based organisations joined with other employers in 1982 to mount an 'incapacity to pay' case in the Industrial Court. The community groups claimed that they were unable to pay their workers recently granted award increases because of the inadequacy of government subsidies.

Underfunding of children's services is not only unjust to workers and indirectly damaging to children; it is also a factor in determining who gets access to services. In situations where there is a shortfall between the subsidies received from government and the actual costs of operating a service the difference must be made up by fund raising and increased fees. A study of occasional care services has shown how this situation works in practice to exclude poor families. Many occasional care centres have a policy that parents can either pay in cash or give their time in return for child care. However, many centres have had to discourage payment in kind because of the need to recoup as much cash as possible to meet basic running expenses.

The low levels of government funding continually place child care workers in a no-win situation. They can either work more hours than they are paid for, thereby effectively lowering their rate of pay, or else they can rely on unpaid workers (so-called volunteers), thereby undercutting their own position in the labour market.

The underfunding of children's services has resulted in most forms of care being supported by large numbers of unpaid female workers. Although these are euphemistically labelled volunteers, in many instances women are obliged to give their labour free as a condition of the use of service — and this is often in *addition* to paying fees!

Unpaid labour of this kind is quite different from the assistance which may be provided through voluntary participation. It is one thing to offer parents the opportunity to become involved in the services which their children use, but quite another to build into funding formulae the requirement that women will work for no pay.

It is true that many women use the experience of working unpaid in child care as a stepping stone on the way to a paid job. However, people who are doing a regular job, which they enjoy, are capable of and valued for, should not have to move out of it merely in search of a wage. Furthermore, as Carole Deagan has pointed out, child care centres should be seen primarily as services for children, not job training centres for adults.

Without doubt the most under-rewarded of all paid workers in the child care field are family day care minders. Although the rates of pay vary between schemes, most caregivers receive no more than a dollar per hour for each child they look after. Thus the average caregiver who minds two children is likely to be working a 40 or 50 hour week for less than 80 dollars. There are no paid holidays or sick leave for family day care minders and, of course, no job security.

Family day care is organised as a series of private contracts between parents and caregivers. Although it is a government sponsored scheme, in fact there is no government contribution towards the wages of the minders. Thus a pay rise of the minders inevitably means a fee increase for the parents, and many could not afford this. It seems to me that the only way to ensure a measure of justice for family day care workers is to break this direct relationship between fees and wages. A government subsidy should be paid to ensure that all minders receive a reasonable wage. There is no justification for paying less to women who care for children in their own homes than is paid to untrained assistants in child care centres.

In conclusion I would like to say that the term community has many meanings and one of them is simply a way of distinguishing between those who work in and for the government and the rest of us. In this sense I believe we ought to be pressing for community involvement on planning bodies, funding committees and so on (although personally I would prefer to use the term public involvement to apply to these things). In any case the kind of involvement we should be pushing for is at the centre where the money and the power lie — not just on the periphery.

Whatever one's views of the merits of self-help, community development and so on, it is surely time that these goals were weighed against others, for example equity, access and industrial justice.

Social support and access to resources in an Australian community

PETER d'ABBS*

I propose to discuss some findings from a study of social support networks conducted in Geelong by the Institute of Family Studies. The study was aimed at finding out:

- The degree to which, and the purposes for which, families draw on informal support networks;
- the characteristics of these informal support networks and the factors influencing these characteristics;
- the nature of the relationship between informal support networks and formal agencies of service delivery, and finally,
- the implications of the findings for current debates about social policy and social welfare.

A random sample of 416 families was selected for the study. In each case, one respondent from a family, aged between 18 and 60, was interviewed using a structured interview schedule, with several open-ended questions. In addition, a series of in-depth case-study interviews was carried out, using respondents selected from the original sample to meet the following quotas: 17 migrant families; 10 single parent families; 11 two-parent poor families; 10 two-parent non-poor families.

It is not possible here to present all of the findings from the study. Some information over and above what I shall discuss today has already been published by the Institute in a first report to respondents, entitled *Social support in an Australian community*. Other findings await further analysis of the data. I shall focus today, firstly, on the sources to which people turned to meet certain kinds of needs; secondly, on the kinds of

* Research Fellow, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

resources obtained through informal networks; and thirdly, the kinds of resources *not* provided by informal networks. The last point is of obvious relevance to the wider topic of this seminar: community based services.

For most of what I have to say, the unit of analysis is the family rather than the individual. There is something of a methodological problem here: as I have said, we only interviewed one respondent per household, and the explanations and answers of any one member of a family need not tally with the corresponding explanations of other members. Nonetheless, our concern is with the family in its wider social context, and for most of the issues with which we are concerned the family is the salient social unit as much as, if not more than, the individual.

To opt for the family as the unit, however, is to lay ourselves open to other charges, which I should like to lay to rest before proceeding further. Firstly, nothing in our findings can legitimately be taken to indicate that we — and I speak here for my colleagues in this study — carry a brief for any particular family formation, be it the nuclear family or any other kind or for any particular mode of service delivery. Secondly, in recording the interpretations of events given by participants in those events, we do not endorse any particular interpretations; rather, we simply act on the belief that people's own interpretations of their social worlds are important, and deserve to be taken seriously. Our underlying value position can be simply stated: we believe that individuals and families should have a maximum choice to pursue their goals through informal or formal networks or through combinations of these.

Finally, we are not unaware that the use of the family as the unit of analysis puts us at risk of concealing significant social processes. As several feminists have argued, the family can be viewed as an institution in which an inequitable sexual division of labour is produced and reproduced. It can, I think, be fairly argued that our analysis does not bring out the dynamics of the processes, but I would also argue that this has been something of a necessary sacrifice in the pursuit of information about family networks and the wider society.

Some theoretical issues

Most contemporary discussions about these broader questions take place with reference to one of four main approaches:

- A conservative approach, which views the welfare state as having an innate tendency to encroach on functions which can and should be performed by the immediate family or extended kin networks.
- An alternative approach, promoted by many social scientists concerned with social policy, according to which formal agencies are required, not as a replacement for family and kin ties, but as a supplement to them. According to this view, people still tend to handle problems within their informal networks, but cannot always do so. The role of the welfare state according to this model is to

provide the supplementary services for those who can obtain limited support from informal networks, and to provide substitute services for those who cannot call upon informal networks.

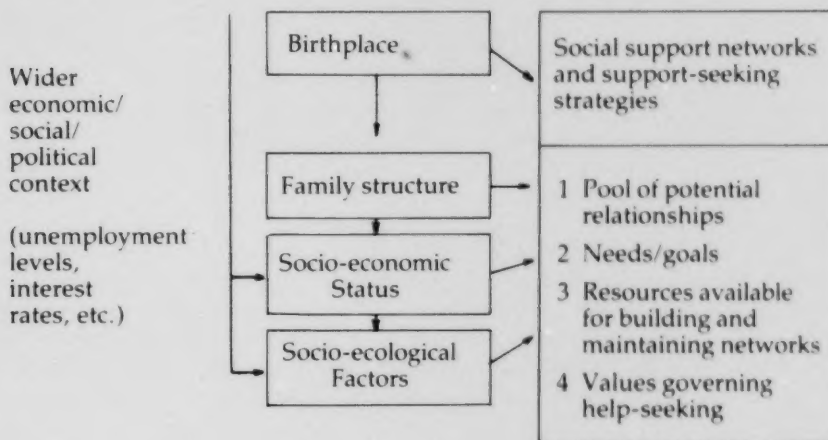
- The third approach bears some relationship to the second, in that it stresses the continuing role of informal networks. This is the approach, promoted by phenomenologically inclined social scientists such as Peter Berger, which sees the nuclear family as the sphere of the *private* in contrast to, and as a bulwark against, an increasingly impersonal *public* world of bureaucratic institutions. This approach has provided a theoretical underpinning for the 'mediating structures' approach to community based service delivery.
- More recently a critique drawing on feminist and Marxist theory has emerged, according to which the nuclear family is viewed as essentially as a patriarchal institution which serves to reproduce an exploitative sexual division of labour associated with it.

Embedded in these 'big' sociological questions are two other, more micro-sociological issues which have in turn given rise to both theorising and research: the first concerns the relationships between informal support networks and formal agencies; the second concerns constraints and other factors governing the help-seeking process. For the present, however, I propose to put these issues aside and turn to considering the Geelong data.

An analytical framework

The sociological factors influencing social support networks and strategies of help-seeking can, I suggest, usefully be conceptualised in the terms summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: An analytical framework for studying social support



The arrows in Figure 1 indicate causal effects. Thus, for example, a person's place of birth is likely to have a direct effect on his or her support network, on the pool of relationships potentially available, and probably on the values and norms that the person brings to situations where help may be sought. At the same time, one's place of birth is also likely to affect one's family structure (e.g. by being related to the number of kin one has living locally), one's socio-economic status (some occupations have a high proportion of migrants) and ecological factors (e.g. living in an 'ethnic' neighbourhood). These factors — family structure, socio-economic status and socio-ecological factors — in turn exert direct effects on support networks and strategies.

I have isolated a few variables which will I hope, however crudely, give us some indication of the connections between these various factors. Moreover, some of Jean McCaughey's remarks will add flesh to some rather bare statistical bones. The variables are:

Birthplace This is categorised in terms of (a) Australian-born, (b) born outside Australia in an English-speaking country, and (c) born in a non-English speaking country. This categorisation is not based on an ethnocentric assumption that all non-English speakers are alike, but simply a need to create categories sufficiently large to permit analysis of underlying structures.

Family structure and socio-economic status These two factors have been combined into a single variable with the following categories: (a) single parent families with dependent children; (b) two-parent poor families with dependent children; (c) two-parent non-poor families with dependent children and (d) other families. The cut-off point for poor/non-poor was a gross annual family income of \$13 000 which, given the presence of dependent children in all of the families in (a), (b) and (c), is manifestly austere.

Socio-ecological factors The variable chosen from this analysis was originally length of residence in Geelong. The effect of this on support networks are complex, however, being compounded by a relationship between social class and length of residence (those in higher occupations tending to have been in Geelong for fewer years). Since I have not yet fully analysed these inter-relationships, I am omitting this factor from the discussion.

Social support networks and support-seeking strategies I shall consider three groups of variables. Firstly, the study focused on selected *needs*; to wit: getting first job, coping with unemployment in the family, setting up one's first home, coping with a serious illness and coping with personal or emotional upsets. Secondly, I shall consider the *sources of help* enlisted for the respective needs (the categories are set out below) and thirdly, we shall look at the *kinds of help* sought from these sources (again, the categories are listed below).

A check back at Figure 1 will show that these three aspects relate to 'needs/goals' and 'resources available'. I shall not refer in this paper to data on 'pools of potential relationships', although the study does

furnish limited data on this point. The question of values is, I think, once more effectively dealt with in the case studies which Jean McCaughey will discuss.

Findings

The single most striking finding of the study is one which, while hardly surprising, needs stating: contrary to the predictions of those who see the welfare state as a threat to family support networks, most people prefer most of the time to cope with problems within their informal networks, or to use a combination of informal resources and formal agencies. This observation is elaborated on in the first report to respondents, and it is implicit in much of what follows.

Let us consider, firstly, the experiences of people with respect to the five needs itemised above. Table 1 shows the proportion of respondents who had experienced the needs or situations concerned:

Table 1: Proportions of respondents experiencing selected needs

<i>Need/situation</i>	<i>Per cent experiencing (N=416)</i>
Getting first job	96.6
Unemployment in family	55.8
Setting up first home	69.5
Serious illness in family	69.5
Personal/emotional upset	64.2

The high unemployment figure here calls for comment: what Table 1 indicates is that in more than half of the families in the sample, at least one person was or had been unemployed. (This figure rises to 62.5 per cent among the 88 families categorised as 'two-parent poor'). Unfortunately, in exploring situations such as unemployment and illness through open-ended questions, no systematic attempt was made to record the time at which the events occurred.

Let us now restrict our analysis for the moment to those families or respondents who had experienced the needs or situations. Table 2 summarises the sources of help to which people turned. Four categories of sources have been distinguished:

- No one — dealt with situation by self (or, in case of illness or upset, immediate family only);
- Informal network — immediate family, or extended family or friends and neighbours; no formal agencies used in help-seeking;
- Services only — no informal network used;
- Combination of informal network and services.

Table 2 Sources of help sought among respondents experiencing needs

Need/ Situation	N=	Per cent turning to:				Total
		No one	Informal network	Services only	Combination	
Getting first job	402	51.0	36.6	8.7	3.7	100.0
Unemployment in family	232	35.8	34.5	8.6	21.1	100.0
Setting up first home	289	15.9	50.2	2.8	31.1	100.0
Serious illness in family	289	10.7	46.0	4.8	38.4	99.9
Personal/emotional upset	267	23.6	44.6	7.1	24.7	100.0

A number of points can be summarised from this table. In all of the situations itemised, between one third and half the families affected had relied entirely on their informal networks.

Leaving aside 'getting first job', where more than half had relied on their own resources, another quarter to a third of the families had utilised a combination of informal networks and formal services.

Fewer than one in ten families turned solely to formal services in any of the situations itemised.

Migrants, especially from non-English speaking countries, appear to be more isolated from, or have less access to, informal networks than Australian-born respondents in all situations except job-seeking. Table 3 compares proportions of respondents from the three birthplace categories who turned to no one in the situations concerned.

Table 3 Percentages of respondents who experienced situations, but turned to no one

Need/situation	Percentages turning to no one		
	Australian born	Born in an English- speaking country	Born in a non- English speaking country
Unemployment in family	28.5	42.4	64.7
Setting up first home	7.4	27.5	42.6
Serious illness in family	6.5	20.6	24.4
Personal/emotional upsets	18.8	33.3	37.2

By the same token, the proportion of migrants who turned to informal networks is lower than that of Australian-born respondents in the same situations, as Table 4 shows:

Table 4 Percentages of respondents turning to informal networks

<i>Need/situation</i>	<i>Percentage turning to informal networks</i>		
	<i>Australian born</i>	<i>Born in an English-speaking country</i>	<i>Born in a non-English speaking country</i>
Unemployment in family	36.4	27.3	23.5
Setting up first home	56.4	32.5	38.3
Serious illness in family	47.7	52.9	31.7
Personal/emotional upsets	49.7	27.3	34.9

With the exception of unemployment (which nonetheless conforms with the overall trend), about one half of Australian born respondents relied on informal networks, compared with one quarter to one third of overseas born (except with respect to serious illness).

A similar breakdown of sources of support by 'family-economic type' did not reveal parallel distinctions, although it did point to a tendency for single parent families to rely more heavily than other family types on formal services for several categories of need. It must be stressed, however, that (a) the number of single parent families (25) is too small to compare with confidence, and (b) most families of all types used either informal networks or a combination of formal and informal links.

Let us turn now to consider the types of help sought through informal networks. I have categorised four types:

- information
- practical help — 'putting in a word with the boss', providing transport, etc.
- financial help
- moral support — discussing problems, lending emotional support, etc.

Table 5 summarises the relationships between sources of help in informal networks and kinds of help for each of our needs/situations. I apologise for the unwieldiness of the table, but see no other way of demonstrating some important points.

Table 5 Kinds of help sought through informal networks (a)

Need/situation	Kind of help (b)	Source		
		Immediate family	Extended family	Friends and/or neighbours
1st job (N=223)	Information	19.3	8.1	22.0
	Practical	30.0	9.4	13.9
	Financial	1.3	—	—
	Moral	47.5	2.7	7.2
Unemployment (N=132)	Information	6.8	4.5	26.5
	Practical	8.3	5.3	13.6
	Financial	15.9	3.0	—
	Moral	41.7	18.9	25.0
Setting up home (N=179)	Information	—	19.6	8.9
	Practical	—	56.4	18.4
	Financial	—	36.3	—
	Moral	—	35.2	11.2
Illness (N=178)	Information	—	1.1	1.7
	Practical	not	63.5	29.2
	Financial	categor-	5.6	1.7
	Moral	ised	43.8	32.6
Personal/ emotional upsets (N=134)	Information	—	3.7	4.5
	Practical	—	8.2	6.7
	Financial	—	3.7	3.7
	Moral	35.1	50.0	49.2

(a) The categories in this table are not mutually exclusive; that is, a family might have obtained both information and practical help from, say, both immediate and extended family in job-seeking. All percentages are based on the appropriate N.

(b) The kinds of help in full are: information, practical help, financial help and moral support.

A word of explanation on the three informal network sources: 'immediate family' refers to the respondents' family of procreation, unless they are still living at home with either or both parents in the latter's household. Thus, the parents of a grown man or woman with a family of his/her own would be classified as 'extended family'.

Table 5 demonstrates the extent to which the different situations generate distinctive patterns of support-seeking in informal networks. In the case of job-seeking for first jobs, both the immediate family and friends and neighbours played an important role in providing information and practical help. The immediate family was also important as a source of moral support (which in this case usually meant 'talking over the issue').

In the case of coping with unemployment, the immediate family plays a less important role, except as a source of moral support and, to a lesser extent, of financial help.

It is in the sphere of setting up a first home that the extended family — predominantly in this case the respondents' parents — emerges as the main source of informal support, providing not only information and practical help but also, in many cases, financial help. (Practical help here included such functions as help with renovations, provision of materials or furniture, or temporary accommodation.)

With respect to serious illnesses and personal upsets, the part played by informal networks becomes more functionally specific. Practical and moral support are obtained from both extended family and from friends and neighbours in the case of illness. Respondents born in Australia or an English-speaking country were likely to turn for practical help to the extended family rather than friends or neighbours, while those from non-English-speaking countries were evenly divided between the two sources of help.

In the case of personal/emotional upsets, the one kind of help widely sought through informal networks was, not surprisingly, moral support, which was sought from all three sources.

One way of looking at relationships between informal and other sources of social support is to consider kinds of help *not* obtained through informal networks. Two points are conspicuous in Table 5. Firstly, it appears that little financial help flows through informal channels with the limited exception of some financial help being extended by immediate families to help cope with unemployment, and the much more pronounced evidence of financial assistance through families for first home purchase (a pattern of help which obviously presupposes certain levels of affluence).

Secondly, while informal channels appear to be important as sources of information with respect to job-seeking, unemployment and setting up a first home, they do not appear to play a corresponding role in cases of illness or personal upsets. Not too much should be made of this point: it may simply indicate that people who are sick know that they should go to a doctor, while many of those facing personal upsets do not want information, they want comforting. Our data, however, does not support this last point. Respondents were not asked to specify the personal/emotional problem they were discussing. Nonetheless nearly all of the 267 people experiencing problems did so. Problems mentioned are listed in Table 6.

Table 6 Most frequently mentioned personal/emotional problems

<i>Personal/emotional problems</i>	<i>Per cent mentioning (N=267)</i>
Marital problems	21.0
Illness or death of family member	20.2
Depression	16.9
Alcoholism, heavy drinking	10.5
Relationship with teenager	9.0
Mental illness	4.5
Other	11.6
Not stated	6.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>

While it would be fatuous to jump to conclusions on the basis of a simple labelling of problems, the list above does not support the view that, for most of these problems, information is not a useful resource. The findings, I suggest, point to possibilities of an expanded role for informal networks in conveying information relevant to personal problems. I would be interested in the views of those more experienced in service delivery on this point.

Summary

Further work remains to be done, first, by way of further analysis of our own data; second, by way of examining some of the implications of points raised here. For the present, however, let me summarise the main points: firstly, most people use informal networks or a combination of formal and informal links in dealing with the needs and problems discussed here; fewer than ten per cent of respondents experiencing the needs or situations discussed relied on formal services alone. Secondly, people born outside Australia, and especially those born in non-English speaking countries, appear to be more isolated from informal social support than other people. Thirdly, an examination of kinds of help sought through informal networks reveals distinctive patterns according to need/situation. Finally, it appears that certain kinds of help tend not to be channelled through informal links. In particular, apart from limited financial help in the case of unemployment, and help for purchase of first homes, there is little evidence of financial help being obtained. Also, in the case of illness and personal upsets, informal channels do not appear to serve as important sources of information.

Families' access to and use of support networks — some case studies

JEAN McCAUGHEY*

The case studies were undertaken with part of the sample selected for the Geelong study of social support networks to explore at greater depth the ways in which various groups of families used the informal support networks of extended family and friends and their use of formal services. They also provide a human face to the statistical analysis.

At the end of the survey interview, after asking respondents if they would have liked more help from government services, we asked them what they thought were the best ways for people to help each other. There was a wide variety of responses but by far the most common ran something like

We would always turn first to our family and friends if we needed help, but sometimes you need outside help as well.

In this paper I want to give examples of the mixture of formal and informal support to families which is revealed in the case studies.

Informal support — extended family

I want to separate out extended family and friends and neighbours because they played distinctive and usually complementary roles.

Peter d'Abbs' paper has already indicated the strength of the evidence for extended family support recorded in the survey. Geelong is a very stable community. Many of our respondents had been born and brought

* Research Fellow, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

up there and had wide extended family networks, often spanning three generations, living close by. This may not be representative of Australia as a whole — hence the importance of repeating the survey in other very different communities in Australia. However, it is worth remembering that the Report of the National Inquiry into Poverty in Australia in 1975 found that by far the greatest proportion of help received came from informal networks of family and friends.

What kinds of help did the extended family give?

Setting up first home

Peter d'Abbs has already indicated (Table 5) that over one third of respondents had received financial help from the extended family. Parents who could manage it often gave or lent money for the deposit on a house, thus enabling their sons and daughters to begin the process of buying their own home. Parents who did not have a few thousand dollars to spare often provided accommodation for young couples for quite long periods of time while they saved for the deposit or built their own home.

More than half the respondents said they had received practical help from the extended family. This included helping with building renovations, providing furnishings or equipment, helping to move in, etc.

Serious illness

In times of illness or the arrival of a new baby, families were particularly inclined to turn to their extended families for support and help. Table 5 in Peter d'Abbs' paper showed that 63.5 per cent had received practical help at such times. Mothers or mothers-in-law looked after the household, cared for children, provided meals, often coming to stay if they did not live nearby. They also provided emotional support.

Personal upsets

As in the case of illness, it was often the extended family who were called on for help in times of crisis. In cases of marital breakdown, the wife and children often found at least a temporary refuge with her parents. Several women who felt they must leave their husbands said they could not have done so without this kind of support from their parents.

Child minding

Child minding was also provided by the extended family. Most respondents, both men and women, were strongly of the opinion that mothers should remain at home with their pre-school children, and should not

work more than part-time when their children were at school. In attitudes to women working there was a difference between women who had had professional or vocational training and had the possibility of an interesting job and those for whom a job meant working in a mill, or a factory, or cleaning offices. The former were more likely to be interested in getting back into the workforce and prepared to pay for regular child care while the latter were much more inclined to prefer to stay at home and look after their families. Most did not find working in an unskilled job a liberating experience and only did it out of financial necessity. Many strongly expressed the opinion that there should be some sort of domestic wage for women who work in the home. They saw this both as a recognition of the importance of their work of rearing a family and, perhaps more importantly, as giving women real options about working inside or outside the home.

Most respondents said they much preferred to leave their children with their extended family when they wanted to go out. Some had married siblings nearby with whom they exchanged child-minding in a mutually advantageous way.

Unemployment

Peter d'Abbs has demonstrated the extent to which both immediate and extended families gave support to the unemployed. Several families in the survey were experiencing the anxiety of having children who could not get jobs when they left school, but none of our respondents were blaming their children and most gave all the encouragement and support they could.

The following case study illustrates the kind of support which many respondents received from their extended family.

John and Christine married at 23. John was a carpenter working in the building industry. They owned a block of land and planned to build their own home. After marriage they lived in a rented flat. Christine continued to work and her wages were put away to buy furnishings. For two years all went well and they had enough money to start building. Then Christine became pregnant and soon after gave up her job. She was asthmatic and had a difficult pregnancy. Then John became seriously ill with a chronic disease which required major surgery. Their situation changed dramatically. Instead of having a good wage which enabled them to pay their way and buy building materials for their house, they were dependent on Sickness Benefits. The rent was more than half the Benefit and they simply could not live on this income. Christine's parents suggested they should move in with them and they accepted this offer.

We now take up the story in Christine's own words:

'It was a big effort getting our own home. John still wasn't strong, but he worked for long hours all week at his job and built our house on the weekend with dad as labourer. Every cent we had went into the house including my savings. We had no money for anything else, but that didn't worry us too much. The house was our aim. We had no social life except for the church —

we were too tired to socialise anyhow. But I don't know what we would have done without mum and dad and being able to live with them for two years until we got our home. We would have lost the house when John was ill. Both lots of parents were very supportive when the baby was born and we always knew they were there and would help us when we needed it.'

Especially when the children were babies this family needed a lot of help with John's recurring illness and Christine's asthma. The parents have provided unfailing support and help with the household in many ways. When the children were older and the family were better off, they were able to have a good social life with grandparents willing to do child-minding and have the children to stay while the parents had a holiday.

Informal support — friends

Not all respondents had extended family within easy reach, and, although some still said they received a lot of moral support, they were dependent on friends for everyday help.

Several of our respondents, mostly young professionals, had come to Geelong to take up an appointment and most had succeeded in quickly establishing informal networks of friends through work contacts, involvement with kindergartens, schools, sporting clubs, churches and a wide variety of community groups. These networks provided many kinds of mutual support such as child-minding, transport, help in illness, house building and renovations. They also supplied valuable information about and access to professional services.

Friends also supplied important alternative support networks when families did not get on well. One respondent said she could never discuss marital problems with her parents because they did not like her husband and had not wanted her to marry him. She relied on two friends she had made through a local play group. Several women who had left their husbands felt that they were no longer wanted by their more conventionally married siblings and said they relied mostly on girlfriends in the same boat. As one respondent said

'We've been through the same experience and we know how hard it is to be a single parent.'

Another kind of help which was important for men who had long periods of illness was visits from work mates. One man who was off work for a year said that such visits had helped him to keep going and to believe that he would get back to work again.

This far from exhaustive account of the ways in which families and friends support each other might seem to imply that there is not much need for services. This is certainly not the case. We must return to the second part of the response which I quoted at the beginning.

'We would always turn first to our family and friends but sometimes you need outside help as well.'

In the rest of this paper I want to examine the situations in which families did turn to services for help.

First, a general observation. All these families had used health services and felt entitled to them. They had easy access through general practitioners, Infant Welfare Centres and Community Health Centres, to a wide range of health services. It was different with services which were more of a welfare type. For most families there was a gulf of varying width between their personal support networks and more formal helping services. In the next section I shall list some of the circumstances in which families were prepared to cross that gulf.

Circumstances in which families used welfare services

When there are no family or friends available

Several respondents had found themselves in somewhat desperate situations. Most, but not all had linked up with a service.

The classic case was a family of a husband, wife and four children who had come to Geelong from Sydney with no money and no friends. Over the next two years they had lived in four different caravan parks, had had another child and the husband had become a heavy drinker. Through the industrial chaplain at work the husband was referred to the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB). They referred him to the Alcohol and Drug Dependence Centre, and found a house for the family. We take up the story in the father's words:

'I thought once I got off the booze things would be better, but in fact it got worse. The wife was always talking about leaving and I said 'Make up your mind and stop yacking about it' and she just packed up her bags and just went! The people at the CFWB were terrific. They got all the children into a home together while I sorted out what I was going to do. I was running around in circles. I didn't know where I was. I wasn't sure what to do. I'd been in a Home myself when I was young and I didn't want my kids to grow up in a Home. I wanted to keep them together.'

And he did. He gave up his job and has lived on the Supporting Parents' Benefit successfully caring for his children for over two years. This has been made possible by comprehensive help from services. Various welfare services co-operated with each other and with the Community Health Centre and Education Department to meet the wide ranging needs of this family. They have not only met their physical needs but have also promoted their well-being and their confidence in themselves.

When the problem was too difficult and when professional help was clearly needed

For example, alcoholism and drug dependency, a father left with permanent brain damage, a handicapped child, juvenile delinquency,

domestic violence. In these and other similar situations many families sought help, but it was often a matter of chance whether or not they found the appropriate service. The following case study illustrates a positive outcome.

'My husband had his own business but he lost it when he became a drug addict. When he told me that he had been on heroin for seven months it was a terrible shock. I just couldn't believe it. I never suspected anything. It just never entered my mind. He said he wanted to get off it and he asked me to help him. We went straight up to his parents. They felt the same way as I did. They were horrified and just couldn't believe that such a thing could happen to their son. We went straight up to the Drug Centre. I knew about it because I heard about it on the radio and knew where to go. Tim's parents drove us up there and came in with us. They were very understanding at the Drug Centre and made it easy for us. They said Tim would have to stay in hospital while he was withdrawing . . . The hospital was not helpful. They kept insisting that I must have known he was on drugs and they made me feel terrible. But the people at the Drug Centre were really good. They explained to me that I mustn't be angry or blame Tim for what had happened and that I would need to support him as much as possible. They could only help him so far, but he would be depending on me and his family to really break the habit. So I pulled myself together and he did get off it completely, but we had a hard time for several months. We were lucky because we had tremendous help from our parents and especially Tim's. Having come through all that we've never had any other marital problems. But we could never have done it, if it hadn't been for the help we got from the Drug Centre.'

In a crisis

Some families only sought help in a crisis. For example, when they had no money for food, rent etc. some went to the Clerk of Courts for money from the Poor Box, or sought other Emergency Aid.

Several respondents had rung Lifeline in a desperate situation and had found the service helped them through the crisis both by listening to their problems and giving them good referrals to places where they could find help. Many respondents were very positive about the help they had received in crisis from services — St Vincent de Paul, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mercy Care, Bethany, the Salvation Army, the Children's Protection Society. In many cases these services provided not only crisis intervention but on-going support which respondents said had helped them to get on their feet again.

When the problem could be defined as a health problem

As mentioned earlier, most families had no hesitation about using health services and were therefore prepared to seek help for problems which were not strictly medical from health rather than welfare-type services. For example, marital problems, behavioural problems of children, and problems which created tensions either at work and in the family. One woman whose second child was severely handicapped

experienced great difficulties in caring for the child, but she only sought help from her doctor who referred her to a psychiatrist. She said that he was helpful up to a point, but this point fell short of providing the physical and social support which she also needed. She described her experience as follows:

'It was all too much. I couldn't cope. I just fell apart. So I went to the doctor and he referred me to a psychiatrist at the hospital. I was an out-patient there for twelve months and was on valium. It helped in a way and the psychiatrist was helpful, but after a year I just decided to stop going and gave up the tablets. I didn't discuss it with anyone. I don't really have any close friends. It's nobody else's business. I don't talk to anyone about family things. It's better to keep them to yourself. My auntie visits me about twice a year from Ballarat and I talk to her. After a year I just felt I couldn't go on coping with the baby, so my husband and I talked it over with our doctor and we decided to have her made a Ward of State and taken into an orphanage. I was very upset at the time, but it seemed the only way.'

This woman received very good service after her child was made a Ward of the State. She had regular visits from social workers which she found very helpful and which enabled her to maintain her relationship with the child.

Families who took their problems to Community Health Centres were likely to have access to a range of services. For example, counselling for marital problems, relationships with teenage children and financial counselling. The fact that these services were within the Health Centre made them acceptable to families who might not otherwise have been prepared to approach them.

When the problem was regarded as a government responsibility

Families used services such as the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) for finding employment, the Department of Social Security (DSS) for pensions and benefits and the Housing Commission of Victoria for housing. These services were regarded as a government responsibility and all felt entitled to use them. Most families were positive about the Housing Commission. For some it opened the way to home ownership which would otherwise have been out of reach; for others it provided adequate rental housing at rates which at least were much lower than commercial rates, even though some felt they still took too large a slice of their pension or benefit cheque. For poor families in particular the Housing Commission provides a vital service, limited by lack of an adequate stock of public housing.

Many families were critical of the CES, usually because they didn't find jobs, a responsibility which should probably not be laid at their door. But young people in particular often found them unhelpful. Their experience underlines the need for such projects as Community Youth Support Scheme (CYSS) which are intended to provide the support and incentives for school leavers trying to enter the workforce.

Most respondents who had used the DSS were chiefly critical of the

inadequacy of pensions and benefits — more of that later. Some of the single mothers deeply resented the intrusions of DSS officers into their personal lives to inquire into their relationships with men.

When the extended family were unable or unwilling to help

Although the extent of family support came strongly through the Geelong survey, there was also some evidence of the ambivalence of the family, that is, of its capacity to be destructive as well as supportive.

Rodgers and Stevenson in *A Portrait of Social Work* describe the extended family as 'a safety net which catches the dependents in time of crisis or of permanent nuclear family breakdown'.

For most families in the survey, the safety net worked well; for a few it was virtually non-existent and for some it had large holes in it. In the latter category were some families whose problems were so overwhelming that friends and family tended to back away. For example, a mother who had a spastic child said:

'My relatives stayed away in droves.'

A woman whose husband suffered permanent brain damage after a car accident said:

'My family and friends were all right at first, but then it got so bad they didn't know what to say so gradually they deserted me — first my parents, then most of our friends except for two girlfriends who at least gave me a shoulder to cry on.'

Families like these desperately needed personal support from the services. Some received it, others did not.

These six sets of circumstances covered most of the occasions when families sought outside help. There were other less common factors: two respondents who had a strong sense of welfare rights were prepared to make use of all available help and did so effectively. It also seemed that for some Catholic families, Catholic services were likely to be accessible and acceptable.

What remains to be done? We need more places in the community where people can make friends and set up their own support networks. The Geelong study suggests that while these opportunities are easily available for middle class families, they are much less so for poor families in our consumer-led society. So we need not only Neighbourhood Houses and other community based services such as child care — though we do need those — but we also need more places where people can meet such as recreation areas, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and learning exchanges. As one of our respondents said

'I believe that the best way to give and receive support is through community based groups for example, through schools, ethnic organisations etc. where people are involved on both a personal friendship and community level. In such organisations a wide range of expertise is potentially available for people to use and share in trying to overcome both individual and community problems. Such community developments should be subsidised by government funds.'

This was said by a professional woman and describes well the experience of middle class families. It could also happen in poorer areas such as Housing Commission estates if people there were given help to plan and develop their own services. And in some places it is happening. It is in the planning and developing of such services that people can gain some control over their own lives and their environment and gain the self confidence to tackle problems at a personal and community level.

In his paper, Peter d'Abbs stated our underlying value position: we believe that individuals and families should have a maximum choice to pursue their goals through informal or formal networks or through combinations of these.

In this paper I have tried to outline the attitudes to and experiences of formal and informal support as told to us by the families in our Geelong survey. But I cannot finish without recording one of the strong impressions which came through their responses. For many of these families their greatest problem was poverty, caused mainly by the totally inadequate level of pensions and benefits. What many of these families needed most was *money*. Of course, money doesn't solve all problems, but it does relieve the stress associated with poverty; it gives families some security and it increases their options and areas of choice.

I want to finish this paper with the case study of a family living on the invalid pension. It speaks more eloquently of the effects of poverty than I can.

The parents of this family are now in their forties and have been married for twenty-five years. They have two married daughters who live nearby and four children at home, one of whom is working, one is at a technical college and two are at school. The husband was an unskilled worker, but in spite of low wages, they were able to save the deposit on their home and are still paying it off. All her married life this woman has had to struggle to raise six children on a low income. Four of the children suffered from asthma. The family has also experienced unemployment. One of her married daughters and her husband are unemployed. They have a young baby and are in difficulties and the mother is trying to help them from her own meagre resources.

Their story is now taken up in the respondent's own words:

'Some years ago, my husband's health got very bad. Some weeks he could only work one or two days, and sometimes he would be off for a whole week at a time. He was not bringing much money home. We were really battling and there was no help from Social Security. He was told he was not eligible because he was only off work for a few days at a time. Finally he had to give up work altogether and was put on Sickness Benefits and, after two years, on the invalid pension. We were very short of money but we managed. We always paid the loan repayments on the house first and, if there are other bills, we cut down on food.

'We only have the bare necessities in clothes. The boys have one good pair of pants and shoes, and a good shirt and pullover to go to church on Sunday and maybe a social. The good clothes are taken off and put away as soon as they come home again. The boys used to play football but that really was a hardship because the boots are so dear and they only last one season. My daughter is fifteen and she would like to do aerobics but we can't afford the

money. When the family is under stress because of illness or not having enough money to do things, we all have family discussions together and talk it out and cope that way.

'Battling is the hardest part. The oldest boy is very good. He is working now and he sometimes pays the electricity bill. He has rented a colour television and that is great entertainment for us all.

'When the children were young we never went out — we couldn't afford it. We couldn't even take them into town (Geelong) in the bus — it cost too much. We could never take them to the pictures — it was too dear for our pocket. The only time the family went for an outing was in the summer around Christmas, when we all went down to the Trotting Complex. The children were admitted free and they all had the time of their lives. We could walk there and back.

'We have never had a holiday. I've never had a break away from home since I was married twenty-five years ago.'

Asked what she would do with an extra \$20 a week she replied:

'More food would come first and better type of food. We could have a roast every Sunday and sometimes roast pork. Educating the children has been a problem. School uniforms have been a big expense in January when we've been recovering from Christmas but at least they got free books. One boy is at the technical college. He has a TEAS allowance which makes it possible but it doesn't cover everything, for example fares. They cost \$6 a week and that's a big hole in our budget, but he is doing well and we'll find the money somehow.

'But we have no generation conflicts or problems and no trouble with alcohol or drugs. Everything including money is discussed openly with the children and they understand and are sensible.

'Aspirations for my children? I would like to see them all with a secure job and the chance to have their own home — not a flash home but comfortable and their own. Maybe, for them to have a little bit of money to go away for a holiday now and then, say, just to Melbourne for a few days.'

SECTION 2

Papers and comments presented
by politicians, government officers
and community representatives.

SYDNEY

Friday 24 June 1983

Program

Chair David Keane

Acting Director

Institute of Family Studies

Opening Ann Symonds MLC

on behalf of The Hon. Frank Walker MLA

Minister for Youth and Community Services

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families

Frank Maas

Institute of Family Studies

Social support and access to services in an Australian community

Peter d'Abbs

Institute of Family Studies

Families' access to and use of support networks — some case studies

Jean McCaughey

Institute of Family Studies

Family support services

Jim Alexander

Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Children's services

Deborah Brennan

Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Chair Barbara Lepani

New South Wales programs

William Langshaw

Director General

Department of Youth and Community Services

Planning and policy

Eva Byrne

Family and Children's Services Agency

Problems of funding

John Humphries — YACS

Jill Sutton — NSW COSS

Brian McGahen — Social Welfare Workers' Union

A panel discussion

Close and summation

Community services

ANN SYMONDS*

It gives me great pleasure to open this seminar on behalf of my colleague, the NSW Minister for Youth and Community Services, Frank Walker. As a politician I often find myself involved in activities which are not ones I might have chosen myself. However, this is definitely not one of those occasions.

I have had a long association with the community services sector. This has usually been as member of organisations trying to improve existing services, or seeking to increase the number and range of services. So I am convinced that good services are an essential part of a civilised society.

This seminar is important because it recognises that families have needs which they cannot meet alone. We are moving away from believing that families can provide everything themselves, and ought to. I hope we are moving towards a society in which we recognise that we have a collective responsibility for the welfare of others.

When these services were known as welfare services, they were usually offered by charities. Child care was for incompetent mothers, as were most other family services. Proper families were assumed to cope without assistance or with the help of kin and friends. Only the desperate depended on outside services.

Of course family and relations are still important. I know the Institute's study of Geelong shows families use and prefer family networks when they are in trouble. However, I'd like you to think for a moment about the types of support we need and their costs.

* This paper was delivered by the Hon. Ann Symonds MLC on behalf of the Hon. Frank Walker MLA, Minister for Youth and Community Services, New South Wales.

Most of us will ring family or friends when we need emotional support, when we want to feel cared for, and when we need to talk to someone we know about problems. That is something that no outside organisation can match. However, should we also have to call on families for someone to mind the kids full time, to do the housework over an extended period, or to cope with a crisis for which they are not equipped?

I believe that families can continue to give love and emotional support most effectively only when they are not conscripted, unsupported and overburdened. Therefore, I believe that services needed by families should be there for all to use, by choice, and when necessary.

So how do we get to this happy state? We haven't set much of an example so far. The services we have are often inadequate, underfunded and too few. They depend on voluntary labour, left to chance and the submission model. This means there are still too many families trying to cope alone, too many children without child care, other children in State care, because the services needed are not there.

I hope that now we have a Federal government which has made some commitments to child care, that things will change. I know the State Minister for NSW, is committed to improving services here. I also know that Welfare Ministers often have to fight hard for funding, harder than Ministers of Defence, or Industry.

If they didn't listen when we talked about need and justice, maybe they will listen when we talk about economic growth. With unemployment topping 10 per cent officially (and you could double that for women), we have to look for new jobs. Many of the old ones are being replaced by microchips, and even when the economy grows, they won't come back.

There is no shortage of jobs to be done in community services, there is just a shortage of money to pay for them. There are estimates that there are two million unpaid workers, in community organisations, and the demand for more workers would almost double that. We could establish a genuinely caring society with enough child care for all, services for the aged and disabled, for the ill and the isolated, and the miserable, given the political will.

And we could employ almost all our unemployed, and lone parents and people with disabilities. We could use, value and pay for all those traditional caring skills women have, and teach men how to do likewise. All we have to do is convert unpaid jobs to paid jobs and meet the demand for services.

People will ask how we pay for it. I think it's a case of establishing new priorities, of making people our focus not just profits. The Federal government would save on benefit payments, gain income tax from the workers, and business would profit from rising demand as people spend their pay.

Sometimes, in fact too many times, government doesn't fund what I want. The war machine, industry assistance, and even help for wealthy farmers have had preference over the needs of children, the aged,

Aborigines, the disabled, non Anglo-Australians — all those groups that lack political power. This should now change!

The community service sector must develop a voice as an industry lobby, and develop family services as a growth industry; labour-intensive, non-polluting, and socially useful. I hope this seminar is a step towards this.

New South Wales' programs for children and families

WILLIAM LANGSHAW*

The legislative framework for the NSW Program for Children and Families is provided by the Community Welfare Act, 1982, which represents the most recent review by the Parliament of New South Wales on the matters being considered by this seminar.

The objects of the Act are set out in Section 5, and I should like to refer briefly to this section and to other sections that might be seen as clearly relating to the provision of community based services for children and families. I hope that participants at this seminar do not dismiss this legislative basis as being mere words that simply reflect the rhetoric of motherhood statements that all governments may feel that they have to espouse from time to time.

I want to emphasise that there is far more substance in this legislation. The Community Welfare Act represents the outcome of very lengthy consultation with many individuals, community groups, and non-government agencies. It is the first time in this State, at least, that legislation allowing a great deal of flexibility in its implementation, so that emphasis can be given to removing disadvantage, also provides the basis for universal application, and sets out in relation to several specific program areas, the principles and guidelines on which implementation should be based.

Although I regret that the Act has not yet been proclaimed, I want to emphasise that its provisions already provide the guidelines on which departmental practices and procedures must be based. One simple example of what I mean, but is not related to this seminar, is instanced in the departmental practice in regard to punishment of residents commit-

ted to training schools for juvenile offenders, when there are disciplinary problems within the institution.

The Child Welfare Act, currently in force, allows isolated detention for up to 24 hours to be awarded by the Superintendent; the new Act limits this punishment to six hours and then only under certain prescribed conditions. By ministerial and departmental direction, it is the Community Welfare Act standard that applies in present practice. Other less specific examples could also be given which indicate an almost de facto implementation of the Act, especially in areas relating to the provision of community services. There are, as I say, many sections, and paragraphs in the Community Welfare Act that set the framework for NSW Programs for Children and Families.

The whole of Section 5, which sets out the Objects of the Act, is relevant but I would mention particularly the following:

Section 5 (1)

- (b) to promote the welfare of the family as the basis of community well-being;
- (c) to ensure the provision, to the maximum extent possible, of services for, and assistance to, persons disadvantaged by —
 - (i) lack of adequate family or social support;
 - (ii) personal or family problems which inhibit adequate social functioning;
 - (iii) the breakdown of the family as a social unit;
 - (ix) lack of information about or access to services or resources available in the community; or
 - (x) residence in places which lack basic services essential to the proper functioning of those persons.
- (e) to assist and encourage collaboration among organisations and persons engaged in the promotion of community welfare or the provision of community welfare services;
- (h) to promote the involvement of the community in the provision of community welfare services and in the social development of the community.

Section 11 sets out the powers of the Minister in relation to community welfare services and social development:

Section 11 (1)

- (c) review, monitor and evaluate programs for the provision of community welfare services and social development programs which are carried out under this Act or are financed, wholly or partly, out of funds provided by Parliament for the administration of this Act;
- (e) develop and carry out, or provide assistance and support for the development and carrying out by persons or organisations of, programs for the provision of community welfare services and social development programs, the objectives of which are consistent with any of the objects specified in section 5(1); and
- (f) with respect to any kind of assistance that may be granted under this Act, cause to be published guidelines specifying the circumstances in which that assistance may be granted.

Section 11 (3)

In the exercise of his function under subsection (1)(e), the Minister shall have regard to the desirability of exercising those functions with respect to programs which:

- (a) develop and strengthen local neighbourhood and community interests;
- (b) are based on the principle of self-help or the transfer of skills and knowledge; or
- (c) take into consideration the multicultural nature of the community.

Provision of funds for community programs is authorised by Section 12 dealing with assistance funds, payments being made only with the approval of the Minister.

Section 12

- (1) The Minister may establish and maintain funds (in this section referred to as 'assistance funds') for the purpose of providing assistance and support for any programs, referred to in Section 11(1)(e), being carried out or to be carried out by any persons, other than himself, or any organisations.
- (3) Payments out of an assistance fund may be made for the purpose of carrying out the program in relation to which the assistance fund is established and maintained and may be so made only with the approval of the Minister.

This section is complemented by Sections 17 and 18 concerning the Community Welfare Fund.

The role of the Director of the Department in the preparation of policies and programs, and the assessment and evaluation of community welfare and social development programs is established by Sections 14 and 15 while fees for service arrangements for exercising any of the functions of the Act can be concluded in accordance with Section 16. In this regard I think that the Department is getting better at setting out funding agreements with non-government organisations that are being funded towards the cost of specific projects.

In relation to Part IV of the Act in regard to general welfare assistance, the object of the Part is set out in Section 25, and the services that may be provided include those referred to in Section 26, some of which are clearly referring to families and children.

The FACSAs paper (Services for Families in New South Wales) gives a list of services that is considered a minimum provision. These are available to a greater or lesser extent, and I want to emphasise that the Department has a basis for the provision of 'personal social services, policies, and programs for families' referred to some years ago in the Report of the Family Services Committee.

A legislative base for the provision of children's services is set out in Part VII, and the objects of the Part are stated in Section 45. This Part also includes the definition of a child in need of care, the licensing of various services, including those early childhood services for children living in their own homes as well as other residential services and, in Division 6, provisions for children in need of care.

The objects of this Division are set out in Section 77, which gets very

close to incorporating in New South Wales law the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The same division sets out the limits on Children's Court action for the protection of the child; includes the provisions for notification of ill treatment or abuse of children; and goes on to set out the law in relation to wards of the Minister when children do in fact have to come into care.

Again, in relation to juvenile offenders, principles relating to the exercise of criminal jurisdiction with respect to children are set out in Section 123.

Finally, in regard to this Act, I would refer to Part XI dealing with Handicapped Person's Welfare. The objects of the Part are set out in Section 259 and the provision of services, apart from the authorisation of those services I have already referred to in earlier sections, is referred to in Section 260. These provisions are quite apart from those sections referring to the responsibilities of the Minister for intellectually handicapped persons who may come under the Minister's guardianship.

This, then, is a brief summary of the legislative framework for New South Wales programs for children and families through the Minister and Department of Youth and Community Services. Other States and Commonwealth authorities are also heavily involved in policies and programs for children and families — the Commonwealth Departments of Social Security, Education and Youth Affairs, Aboriginal Affairs, Employment and Industrial Relations, Health, and, at State level, Housing, Health, Education, Transport, to name but a few.

The Department's funds and their application

It has been estimated that the various community programs funded through my department allow the employment of about 9 000 full or part-time workers. There is, of course, argument about the level of wages that are paid at the present time, and clarification on this issue will probably bring its own problems about the adequacy of funding and the government's ability to contribute at the level sought. In terms of family services, one of the difficulties, I suppose, at a seminar like this, is the question of working definitions, as virtually all community based services can be regarded as family services even if only to a small extent. It is difficult to establish a working definition for family services that gives reasonable separation from other types of service. Community based programs cover intellectual and physical handicap, child abuse, child care, transport, housing, and disaster welfare, all of which tend to focus ultimately on the family without necessarily expressing that fact. Programs for these subjects tend to be expressed in terms of the entity within the subject, for example the abused child, the handicapped person, the multicultural community. Family welfare can also coincide with policies on broad community issues such as women's anti-discrimination policies. For example many sole parent family problems can be resolved by the provision of better services for women generally,

such as training and retraining schemes, more child care facilities, more employment opportunities and less discrimination. For the purpose of this paper, the interpretation of 'community based' is taken as non-statutory, community managed and independent of functional control by any non-family service authority; so, in terms of the grants we provide, almost any non-government body can be eligible.

Now in terms of the funding arrangements for this year, the total departmental budget (departmental staff and its own direct programs) have worked out at \$135 million and that's a relatively small amount in terms of the list of services which includes emergency cash assistance and the like. We expect to exceed the budget of \$11 million and that was an increase of some 40 per cent on the previous year's expenditure. In terms of information referral services, the expenditure on neighbourhood centres was just over \$1.5 million, and other funding was provided for special regional and other information centres. Our community welfare development expenditure this year was \$5.757 million, including such initiative as the Redfern Legal Centre for \$80 000, the Hunter Social Development Program, and the like.

In terms of children's services, we have spent just over \$2 million, and while I have no doubt that some will criticise our expenditure in this area, nevertheless that is a substantial increase in actual expenditure on what we have ever done before. I would emphasise that although people are saying that there is less money around for welfare services, that is only true in part. Our expenditure is still rising and while we have had limited increases this last financial year (five per cent or 10 per cent) there has in fact been an increased growth, the intention being, of course, to try to extend a range of programs further around the State and provide a more adequate cover. In terms of the children's program, pre-school subsidies still take up the bulk of the money with roughly \$14.5 million spent in subsidies to 628 pre-school centres. The 20 per cent subsidy for long day care programs funded through the Commonwealth, amounted to \$1.736 million, and the State spent \$2.1 million on new capital programs for neighbourhood children's centres. \$923 000 was provided for recurrent grants for works already commenced, and there were grants in aid in terms of equipment grants and the like for \$175 000; occasional care programs (\$217 000); two for libraries (\$134 000); mobile resource units (\$418 000); other special services and miscellaneous children's services of that type in early childhood received some \$840 000 and \$460 000 went to the Sydney Day Nursery Schools Association.

Priority has been given to certain special needs groups — children from families in economic need, migrant and handicapped children, and so on. The development of new capital programs for multi-purpose centres is now based on a planning model, a simple planning model which is based on a formula of the number of children aged 0-4 years in the population, children of 0-4 years with mothers in the workforce and the number of existing child care places available in particular local government areas. The buildings under this new capital program are

constructed by the Housing Commission, and local government becomes responsible for the operation of the service through the establishment of community management groups. As an ongoing program of support, where assistance with management skills is necessary, we've tried to develop some of our advisory services, but again our staffing arrangements are still inadequate to give a proper statewide cover. Planning procedures to identify other disadvantaged groups are being investigated for next year; for example, children at risk, isolated children, and children from disadvantaged ethnic groups. Planning also involves joint proposals with the Minister for Youth and Community Services and the Minister for Education with regard to use of government property. The Education Department does, of course, provide some 60 pre-school centres within its own operation. Cash assistance of \$11 million has or is being made to provide grants this year in response to 130 000 applications and in this area there must be, of course, a strict means test. Under the rent release scheme we spent over \$5 million in six months. Pressure on the department has been extreme in this last period, but we view the coming year optimistically.

Planning and policy and community based services for children and families

EVA BYRNE*

Social policy writings from the 1970s to the present have included a constant, if somewhat uneasy, focus on the family, never far from policy issues, but never really near to planning.

The issues raised by Frank Maas as confronting the localisation of services to families and children warn that a shift in responsibility and cost of community care programs to the voluntary sector may well fragment services and distance them from strategies open to government to meet human services needs. It may also have the effect of dampening preventative measures and meet only emergency needs.

Exploring some issues of policy and planning may indicate ways in which community based services for children and families are a shared point of contact for consumers and providers, and are one strategy of in-depth planning to meet human service needs in a modern society.

The policy framework for such in-depth planning needs to include basic integrated policies on housing, incomes policy, education, community services, work, and leisure.

Changes in societal lifestyles, work environments and living patterns, and in the social, legal and economic and leisure time frameworks impinging on family life and structure, have changed the predictability and expectations of family and its dynamics. There are new ways of understanding the family.

The notion of family has undergone many mutations in definition and the current one most in use in the context of family policy is that of a social unit comprising at least one adult living with one or more children or other dependents, and responsible for their care. The provisions of

the Family Law Act, 1976 also created some new legal aspects of the family.

It was David Donnison who emphasised that it is application of the distributional character of policy decisions which need to be considered. This view provides opportunity for wide discussion on the topic of planning and policy and community based services for children and families.

Many areas of social policy relate directly to the well-being of children and families, and these include education, incomes policy, work, housing, leisure, health and urban life, and contribute to the environment of living. But in their distributional character, direction and management there is only limited opportunity for consumers to exercise choice, or even for ministerial departments to share planned policy options and goals. Policies and factors affecting families and their support networks have been documented by a number of bodies, the Social Welfare Commission 1973-6, the Family Services Committee 1977, the Social Welfare Research Centre, the Royal Commission into Human Relationships, and since 1980 the Institute of Family Studies itself, established under the Family Law Act of 1975, and others. The 1980 National Conference 'Towards an Australian Family Policy', sponsored by the Council of Social Welfare Ministers, attempted a conceptual framework, but found the subject of family policy elusive and the definition of community support networks for families somewhat ephemeral.

An approach to the provision of community based services for children and families was initiated by the Federal government with the Children's Services Program and the Family Support Services Scheme, and was developed by FACS Program in Victoria. In South Australia a Family Research Unit developed Family Impact Statements on policies to advise the government, and in New South Wales an advisory body on the development of services for families and children was set up, the Family and Children's Services Agency. In various ways they provide opportunity for review of funded programs and policy options.

It is perhaps characteristic of Australian society that policies in the human services have developed as segregated and compartmentalised — for example the institutional care of children, the aged, teenagers, housing, the consequences of immigration.

While there is no lack of advisory bodies from the Social Welfare Commission to National Consultative Councils on Social Welfare, the Social Welfare Policy Secretariat, the Institute of Multicultural Affairs, to name but a few, besides others already mentioned, as well as government sponsored research bodies, the authority and advice of such bodies must be filtered through the political and economic power structure at the different levels of government with, at most, token views of consumers being received from the non-government sector. A recent attempt to open up other paths and strategies for consensus on some issues affecting Australia as a nation was the National Summit in April 1983, in which the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Social Services participated as consumer bodies.

It has been said by Altman that there will be no radical change in Australia until we develop a capacity to envisage new forms of social order and recognise that '... social policy needs to be changed'. There needs to be a greater politicisation of issues at community level and the effects of this seen in the distributional powers relating to resources for human services. This will help to determine to a much greater extent how we manage our daily lives within the orbit of everyday access to complementary community services.

Why community based services?

The shrinking of the welfare dollars for government services at a time of increasing demand for welfare programs has forced governments without basic plans to meet more than residual needs, to seek more economical ways to provide support services to those in the community, who, as a priority, need and demand a level of community support — dependent children, single parents, the handicapped, the aged, working mothers. At the same time, the private resources of persons on a unitary income have also shrunk. The voluntary labour of the non-government sector is attractive to governments trying to meet the demand for support services. The situation of women in the economic recession provides them with even less opportunity for any employment, and slows down the movement towards equality of opportunity for women in the workforce. Thus a supply of part-time labour is relatively assured, and resistance by employer and employee, for different reasons, towards organised working conditions is also relatively assured.

The dangers of providing detached community based services for children and families, if not linked to a continuum of policy strategies on the integrated provision of human services, are overlapping services, lack of linkage in local caring arrangements, maldistribution and ad hoc targeting; for example, poor access by people whose only language is other than English, or for the handicapped, or those with limited mobility. The fact that there is only a fragmentary policy framework in the human services at government level makes planning a precarious venture.

Further evidence of the lack of an integrated policy framework at the State level was apparent in the *Family Care Study* of three municipalities in Sydney completed in 1982 by Dr Ray King, of the Community Research Centre, Sydney University, for the Family and Children's Services Agency. It exposed an almost total lack of interaction at government policy levels on service delivery in health, education, welfare, and to some extent housing. In the areas studied, the local consumer was confused by mixed messages on types and sources of services, their availability and right of access. An overview of the *Family Care Study* is available. Also available is another study completed for FACS by Social Research and Evaluation Ltd in 1982, *Family Services in N.S.W.*:

Review Paper No. 1. This series will attempt to document aspects of family services and policy in New South Wales over the next year or so.

Another report on community based service provisions, *Loaves and Fishes*, prepared by the New South Wales Council of Social Service for the Agency, reveals at the interface between government and non-government bodies the need of power transfers in terms of resources essential to provide a stable administrative base for the provision of community based services.

Major elements at the planning level of determining policy direction and resources distribution for services to children and families are value perceptions, legal powers, structures and levels and categories of intervention, political and governmental commitment on funds/resources on an on-going basis, and defined management practices.

Perceptions of social values are diverse and are integral to political process and action, including lobbying and advocacy. Through the political system society sets its goals in complex sets of checks and balances, whether relating to competing demands and compromise, or to broader planning strategies. As Graycar puts it, what is deemed a legitimate claim is very much a value question. The social changes which affect the child, the family and the community are processes which throw up new priorities, new values, new needs, which in the absence of goals and of a plan and a commitment to provide resources to meet goals, leaves the contest to be one between technocrats and ideologues.

Examples of technical organisational ability are to be found in the Task Force on Health and Welfare 1976, 1978, the Galbally Review of Migrant Services 1977, which created room in the bureaucracy to absorb community based programs which the community had helped to build, the Review of NSW Government Administration 1977. A reflection of ways in which institutions of government responded to the major inflow of immigrants is contained in Jean Martin's book, *The Migrant Presence* (1978), and in some ways is relevant to all consumers of services in Australian society.

Paolo Totaro points out that despite the rhetoric about multiculturalism, the number of persons of ethnic background employed in institutions/services is still constrained and it is 35 years since the mass migration program began. Support for language/cultural specific community based services is still only minimal.

The Bailey and Wilenski Reports promoted reform of administration, but the purposes of administration are the planning and policy goals and the resources committed to meet those goals.

Sugata Dasgupta, on the other hand, considers that social development (of services, for example), should not be developed by a bureaucracy for the consumers, but be the result of direct involvement by consumers. This would, however, have limited prospects of success if development policy and resource allocation were not assured by planning and review processes.

The Australian Constitution, Ronald Sackville points out, has powers for transfers of funds for benefits and allowances purposes in S.51, and

in S.96 power to make conditional grants to the States. The NSW Community Welfare Act 1982 specifies disadvantage as a consideration in the distribution of services. Since the 1940s the wrangles between the Federal government and States on the allocation of funds to States have provided a chequered history of policy shift and resource allocations. The National Social Policy in the 1980s Conference held in Canberra in 1982 failed to document or come to grips with this major area of planning and strategy. There have been two major attempts at national planning to meet human service needs — the Post-War Reconstruction Program 1943-49 and the operations of the Whitlam Government, 1972-75, both of which have passed into history.

The interface between the provider of service and consumer at the local level is a response to need, whether that need is government-sponsored or community based and is a point of subtle exchange.

Elaine Martin suggests a four-way definition of the need to enable planning goals to be set up. They are a consensus definition of need relating to both consumers 'and providers' views; non-consensus areas of need, for example, a subjective experience of needs not recognised by providers as appropriate for intervention such as language/cultural needs or some other incapacity; and needs defined by providers in such a way that services are imposed on clients. An example of the latter is the provision for Aboriginal people or communities of community based services with white cultural/community values and white administration. This has been well documented in the Aboriginal Children's Research Project of the Family and Children's Services Agency.

The power of the bureaucracy was commented on by Wilenski '... officials themselves inevitably exercise considerable decision-making powers without being held publicly accountable', and if one substitutes provider for public servant implementing policy, unless there are some other structural arrangements of power sharing in the formulation of policy and its levels and categories of intervention and of accountability, the model of provision of community based services for families and children will be simply a transfer of the responsibility, but not control of resources, to provide the care program. As resources are likely to diminish in current times, community based services for children and families may be resourced only sufficiently to meet emergency needs at local community level.

Power sharing arrangements in the formulation of policy requires a definition of policy goals, a known commitment by governments to resources for human services, say a weighted per capita model, expertise in delineating priorities of needs, and an agreed plan of management.

Management takes the planning process to a more refined stage of implementation and involves evaluation and accountability at the various levels.

There needs to be a determined devolution of power to enable an equitable distribution and an adequate management of resources for community based services and to ensure the policy and planning process across relevant areas of service delivery.

The responsibility of governments is to define policy and to provide a resourced, shared planning process for delivery of human services in the community, and be guided by the goals of promoting the well-being of children and families in the community. Recognising self-help as laudable does not diminish the need to recognise that a caring role in a community based service is a necessary community support. It should be recognised as such and adequately resourced as part of a political and government commitment to defined policy goals for the human services, and a resourced broad plan of action and review to achieve those goals.

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General comments on community based services

JOHN HUMPHRIES*

It seems to me, from my brief reading of the material that has been presented and from some of the background material, that it would be extremely useful to the conference to perhaps look at a consolidated review of total expenditure on family services provided by Commonwealth and State governments, statewide non-government agencies and regional non-government agencies, and get a total picture of the expenditure on family services.

There are two general comments I would like to make. The first is that the department learned through a number of exercises that we went through last year that the only strategy that would work to reduce imbalances in regional distribution patterns was a thorough reallocation of priorities. That was based mainly on the realisation that the basic problem is a shortage of funds across all program categories for all regions.

As an example, on an equitable allocation of monies the Hunter region in 1981/82 was \$56 000 below the amount it should have received on a per capita population basis. The department's planning study on the Hunter region led to a recommendation that children's services held the highest priority under the Hunter Social Development Program. So \$460 000 will be spent under the program on children's services in 1982/83. So the issue for us clearly is that X amount of dollars should be going to region A rather than region B, because they are not getting enough. The fact is that across the State in all program areas the resources are inadequate.

* Resource Allocation Unit, Department of Youth and Community Services, New South Wales

The other point I want to make is in terms of general planning strategies. Under the restructuring, the department sees that it now actually has the capacity to base its planning and priority setting on the use of public funds on local and regional structures for probably the first time. It is clear from the type of planning that has gone into the estimates process this year, that there has been a vast improvement in terms of the planning base on which the estimates are being prepared. These can only improve, so the department is fairly confident that it will be able to operate very much on local and regional planning for the future.

Some considerations in establishing relevant community based services

JILL SUTTON*

One of the major points of confusion that seems to have arisen in these papers and which may continue to raise difficulties is the meaning attached to the term 'community based services'. I think that we really do need sometimes to separate out the elements of a community base and talk about which elements we want to keep and which we can do without.

We tend to approve of 'smaller' base services because they stigmatise us less when we acknowledge our need for services, and because we retain our individuality more easily if we can go to a service which is small and locally based. Some of us would dispute how much involvement we want to maintain in all funding applications and management; but there has been a general feeling that community services are so difficult to get just right, in the appropriate style, that it is important that, at the moment, at least we have community involvement in the management of those services. But of course a lot of us are getting very exhausted from being involved in managing a lot of different services.

There may come a time when we simply want a service and trust some agencies, locally based, to provide it. I sometimes think that some forms of child care might come into this category, particularly services which are provided for really desperately needy people who can't always have local involvement or consumer involvement because they are not always in a position to be involved. I am very keen to see the development of needs-based service provision of the sort mentioned in John Humphries' paper, and indeed we did produce a publication in relation to children which showed that on the basis of submission, our services

* Deputy Director, New South Wales Council of Social Services

simply had not been distributed according to need. We are pleased that the department is trying to rectify that, and, of course, we must acknowledge that the rectification comes from some centralisation of service provision, so that whilst the service is still provided locally and can retain local responsiveness and sensitivity, the decisions about where the need is actually have to depend on comparisons of statistics between areas. And that has to be done centrally. So we can remain enthusiastic about a community base for services while acknowledging that part of its provision, and decisions about its provision must be made centrally.

New South Wales has, I suppose, emphasised more its enthusiasm about social wage concepts rather than family policy. It is not that we don't find a considerable interest in family policies, especially as it has produced some excellent services, but, basically, our interest is in the provision of services for all people. We are not especially interested in the provision of services for people in groups as family policy tends to imply. People who live on their own are especially vulnerable in needing services and provide a very valuable human resource in our society which is often overlooked in the provision of services.

We see too the importance of all sorts of dependencies in the community, but they are not necessarily just those of children or parents. We think it is important to recognise that people have to take turns in being independent and that sick adults for instance can cause family breakdown just as much as some problem with a child. Those things have to be recognised, and those sort of dependencies have to be honestly shared in the community, so that services can be quickly developed for them. In fact, I would like to point out with reference to the Geelong study that we really do have to watch the danger that we might be getting back from the community something which we are pushing on it. For example, that need to privatise and keep things in the family, so well illustrated by the case histories of previous papers, may not just be the idea of the people involved but may be actually imposed by us, many of us as professionals, who insist on the importance of confidentiality. We may find that insisting on privacy and confidentiality of information might be actually keeping people away from each other when they have common problems and that they would really be able to find solutions to their problems much more easily if they got together over them. So I think that it is very important that we notice the excellent work that family support services have done in bringing people together with common problems and in encouraging them to see each other's problems. This is acceptable and somewhat inevitable in our community. So we have had some excellent lobbies for housing, for loans from the financial counselling group, and so on. By bringing people together over common problems, much more creative solutions about services and structural changes in our society may emerge.

We have recently produced a very useful book called *Loaves and Fishes* which gives some independent estimate of the costs to community groups of providing various groups of services, so that underneath the headings of 'Information Services', 'Accommodation Services' and 'Co-

ordinating Services', and so on, we have independent estimates of the cost of budget items. We did this with some money from the Family and Children's Services Agency, and we did it because even in the past there has been very little consistency in the funding of agencies to provide services. There has been tremendous variation and colossal underfunding which resulted in high turnover in staff, a lot of unpaid work and underpaid work, and the loss of skilled workers to the public sector.

I would like to finish by pointing out that we have taken a very firm stand, especially in these times of recession, against the dangers of allowing volunteers to increase in the non-government sector. We are particularly concerned not just that this conceals the true cost of providing services, but also that women usually are involved in the provision of this kind of unpaid labour. It means that the non-government sector recently seems to be dependent on people who don't really need income for their work to keep themselves alive. They do it because they have some other source of income. That is a particularly dangerous situation to be allowed to develop.

Unionisation, awards and regulations and their impact on community based services

BRIAN McGAHEN*

What I want to talk about are probably the most significant changes and factors that will be affecting community based family services in the near future; that is the reality of unionisation of those services and the effect of the awards and industrially regulated conditions which will increasingly become the reality in the area in the next few years. I would like to draw your attention to our success in the High Court last week. There we won access to the Federal industrial system, which means that in the future we will be able to achieve Federal awards, industrial awards and conditions for welfare workers right across the country. We are the first white-collar union since Federation to achieve this, and I think it is a remarkable achievement for a small union such as ours and will mean enormous changes for community based welfare services in Australia. It also means that the fervent wish of governments and the large private agencies that we would just go away, is not going to be granted. We are definitely here to stay and in New South Wales the union has more than doubled its membership in the last 18 months. We are continuing to recruit, and our success in the High Court means that we are more determined than ever to achieve our rights for award wages and conditions.

The significance of unionisation in welfare areas is of course immense. Previous speakers have referred to a whole lot of factors about the reality of welfare provision that have been a result of, or perhaps the cause of, the lack of unionisation in our area. It is the policy of the union at the present time not just to achieve wage justice for our members through persuasion or argument; but we intend to get our statutory rights, our

legal rights, through the Industrial Courts and through the arbitration system and on that basis we expect to have award rates and conditions in place. We intend to enforce them and we intend to ensure that our members are given wage justice along with the 90 per cent of the workforce in Australia who have unions, who have awards. We think it will mean a great improvement in the provision of welfare services in this country. We believe that adequate funding that will flow from award wages will mean better planning and a need for much better administration both at government level and at the local level. At the present time, we have really horrendous situations day after day in the union where well-meaning local management committees simply run out of funds. This means that members are thrown out of work with no notice at all, quite often because the wife of the chairman doesn't like them or because of some other pretext.

The union's most important task is the politicisation of the whole welfare area and when I say politicisation, I mean the moving of welfare issues into the main stream of political debate in Australia. Our struggle for award rates and conditions in the welfare area brings us into the broader trade union struggle for adequate wages and conditions.

The policy of the union in the trade union movement is for an across the board increase in minimum award rates. Clearly our members share a common interest with the clients of our services, because both the workers and the clients are very definitely at the lower end of the wage scale in this country. So it is clearly in our interests both as workers and as welfare workers to push for the increase in minimum award rates. This means in the trade union area that we are active in the Labor Council in each of the States, we are active at ACTU level, we are active in the Labor Party, to which we are affiliated. We support the prices and incomes accord that was developed between the ACTU and the union movement before the elections. We especially support those parts of the accord that deal with the maintenance of real wages over time, the increase in the social wage and the rights of the unions to have a say in the broader economic plan, particularly in questions of investment and industrial planning.

The fact remains, it seems to me, that low wages are the single greatest cause of poverty in Australia, and when we are fighting the low wage of our workers, we do it in solidarity with the other unions that are fighting low wages right across the board. I have no doubt our existence has and will continue to cause conflict in the welfare area. I think that is inevitable, and we don't apologise for the fact. We find that we have little in common with many of those large agencies in this city which, for example, refuse access to our union organisers, saying, 'Well you can come around after work', or who tell their workers not to join the union and suggest that union members won't have a long career in the agency.

We have little in common with that welfare agency which is represented at this seminar, which 18 months ago at the height of the trade union's struggle for shorter working hours decided that they would increase the working hours of their workers from the 35 hour week,

which they had been working, to 40 hours per week. We also have little in common with that agency or that group of agencies, again which is represented here, which called a meeting of welfare agencies to oppose our award application in New South Wales and has been to see the Premier and has lobbied other large welfare agencies against the union in New South Wales.

Mr Langshaw estimated that there are 9 000 people working in agencies directly funded by Youth & Community Services in New South Wales. I estimate that there are up to 5 000 other people working in the non-government welfare sector in New South Wales. This gives our union a potential size of 14 000 in this State. That means that we are certainly not a small union, potentially we are quite a powerful union and we intend to achieve that power. It means that the questions of welfare funding, welfare planning, will be taken up in the trade union movement and we intend to take these welfare questions out of the realm of charity and out of the realm of intellectual discussion into mainstream politics in the labor movement and elsewhere. In order to do that, of course we need to get broad support across the welfare sector, and I think that so far we have done that. Increasingly, we find new people coming into the union all the time to join, not only from the areas where we have had support, but from new areas right across the State. I think that this will cause difficulties for a lot of community services and it is certainly not the policy of the union or the intention of the union to pressure people who, in good faith, are trying to provide services in their local area.

But we do believe that governments have a responsibility to pay award rates in the welfare area just as award rates are paid in education, health and other human service areas. I can't imagine that services could be provided in health or education if people were being paid the sort of pittance wages that are frequently paid in our area. The achievement of award rates and conditions will mean that governments will be bound to pay those rates and conditions. While I said that we won't compromise on our intention to push for those rates and conditions, we certainly do not intend to have a situation in which governments can use excuses of award rates to close services. To that end, I would like to say to all those agencies represented here today that we are very happy and indeed anxious to form links and alliances with all the agencies in the area, to ensure that the achievement of award rates and conditions don't mean a reduction in services but in fact mean an increase in services and an increase in services that are properly funded and properly managed.

MELBOURNE

Thursday 30 June 1983

Program

Chair David Keane

Acting Director
Institute of Family Studies

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families

Frank Maas
Institute of Family Studies

Family support services

Jim Alexander
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Children's services

Deborah Brennan
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Social support and access to services in an Australian community

Peter d'Abbs
Institute of Family Studies

Families' access to and use of support networks — some case studies

Jean McCaughey
Institute of Family Studies

Chair Hayden Raysmith

Executive Director
VCOSS

Victoria's approach to community based services

Meredith Sussex
Acting Assistant Director-General
Department of Community Welfare Services

Community based perspectives

Bev Long
Children's Services Officer, Kensington/Flemington
Colin Kent
Budgetary Advisory Service, Barwon Region

A panel discussion

Close and summation

Victoria's approach to family and children's services

MEREDITH SUSSEX*

The subject I have been asked to speak about tempted me into a comparison of Victoria's approach to community services to children and families as against the rest of Australia. In fact, it tempted me to talk about how much better the Victorian approach is than that of other States. Although, of course, I think that is true, I am going to resist the temptation and instead openly address the issues surrounding the efforts of my own Department to develop a major community based program — the Family Support Services Program.

I would like to cover the difficulties that have been encountered in the operation of this program, the direction the Department is currently taking with it, and finally the direction which the Department sees for the range of community based family and children's services of which Family Support is a part.

First I want to present an important context for this discussion — the context of Victorian government policy.

The government's health and welfare policies outline a clear and unequivocal commitment to the principle of community based services. The policies are firmly based in a belief in self-determination and the view that a system of community supports is a right, not a privilege.

This commitment was strongly reinforced in my Minister's statement on Community Welfare Priorities last year. In that statement the Minister stressed the importance of providing services in such a way that people who use them are assisted to retain or regain control over their own lives.

* Acting Assistant Director-General, Program Development, Department of Community Welfare Services, Victoria

With this foundation, the key tenets of government policy on family and children's services are:

- The provision of children's services as services which support families
- localisation of services
- neighbourhood based service delivery
- the active involvement of local government
- user and community participation in planning and management of services
- service integration
- effective planning and rational use of resources
- the pursuit of social justice and economic redistribution.

This policy context is very important, but it is also worth noting the truism that it is a long hard road from policy to making it happen on the ground.

Most of you will be aware that the joint Commonwealth/State Family Support Services Program commenced in 1977 and was 'designed to provide options for carers and children to stay together when the family is facing critical problems'. The Program attempted to ensure the provision of personal social services with a view to increasing the capacity of individuals and communities for self-determination given government support. It was introduced in the context of regionalisation of the Department of Community Welfare Services which aimed at a more localised approach to the definition of need and the provision of services.

In many ways the Program has been extremely successful, extending the reach of support services across the State, having some impact on the number of children in institutions, providing a service to a very large number of clients, and providing a base for advocacy, social action and community organisation in some areas. At the same time, from the beginning the program has also been beset with problems, some of which are still with us today. The best known has been the constant anxiety about continued funding, and the complex funding and administrative arrangements. This has resulted in competition both between funded bodies and between service categories. It has also worked against rational planning.

Another difficulty has been the ill-defined and contradictory objectives which included both a remedial and preventative focus. Coupled with the huge and increasing demand for generalist support, this has created tensions for agencies caught between a developmental and crisis intervention approach.

There has been uncertainty as to the target group of the program and increasing polarisation of ideological positions. For example, there has been a conflict between a focus on services which increase parental competence through the establishment of supportive local networks and a more traditional view which doubts parental competence and supports the provision of intensive specialist services. This polarisation increases with the competition for resources. The result is that services can lack clarity of purpose which, in the long run, reduces effectiveness.

At the moment the Family Support Services Program includes a variety of auspice agencies with conflicting ideologies and service approaches. They include traditional church welfare agencies, small voluntary organisations, local government, local committees, ethnic organisations, community health centres, and the Department itself. The diversity of auspice is reflected in the services. For example, the Program includes one Family Aide service operating as part of a home-help service, integrated with universal services and working with 60 to 70 clients per year. At the other end of the spectrum is a small church-based agency, working in an intensive way with a small number of clients over a long period of time and barely integrated with other services. While diversity of service type is healthy, it should be related to coherent planning of services to suit local need and not be a result of ad hoc and haphazard service development.

A further contradiction is the small number of service categories and a commitment to flexible service development which is responsive to local needs. Family aides, family counselling and financial counselling do not make a comprehensive Family Support Program, nor at the moment do they sit easily together.

This difficulty is aggravated by fragmented coverage of services which is clearly inconsistent with the principles of localism. In some areas we have still not achieved sub-regional, let alone local, coverage. In the southern region, for example, one part-time Financial Counsellor is expected to service the whole region.

A final problem has been with the focus on 'family' which has been narrowly defined. This has created problems for agencies who are attempting to meet the community development objectives and are having to ration their services somewhat arbitrarily from the point of view of their neighbourhood or locality. It also ignores communities of kinship and interest which would not fit into the definition as set out in the objectives.

Given these problems, and in the light of the government policy commitments which I have outlined, it was clearly necessary for the new government, elected in April of last year, to go back to first base and to attempt to redefine the rationale for the funding of Family Support Services in Victoria. 'The Rationale for the funding of Family Support Services in Victoria', published in September last year, was the beginning of this redefinition. In developing a new approach, the Department is now insisting on much closer links between existing Family Support Services, local government and generalist services within a service area.

What we wish to establish is a closer relationship with formal professional services and the generalist service network. The new Family Counselling guidelines are an expression of this new policy. The outline of this program establishes a clear link between professional counselling and general services and outlines procedures to ensure accountability to that network.

The Family Counselling guidelines were developed after consultation which brought out the dichotomy in the program and indicated the urgent need for guidance in the direction of the program.

The Program is designed to provide professional casework counselling services which have a community development focus. The emphasis will be on utilising the skills of social workers and welfare workers to provide personal support to people in stress or crisis, and to resource universal services in such a way that they are fully accessible to such families and individuals. This approach is founded on the notion that there are situations where families and people need intensive support from formalised services but that these should be extensions of, rather than replacements for, general services and community networks.

Implementation of the new approach is not easy and seminars like this assist both in defining what we should be doing, and how we can do it better.

However, even if we had all the answers about Family Support Services and had a uniform commitment to a *true* community based Family Support Services Program across the State, the Department is under no illusion that this would be a panacea for anything in particular.

State governments find it necessary and useful to identify service activities in terms of discrete programs. However, this process is much less useful for families and individuals using services at the local level. In fact, in Victoria program categorisation has proved to be a decided problem in the operation of services at a local, and indeed at a State, level. These problems will not be solved by modification or changes to one program alone. It is widely recognised that there need to be very substantial changes in development and operation of all families' and children's services in the State.

This issue is being addressed by the Review of Early Childhood Services. Since the report of that review is not yet available, I will speak to you about the views expressed by my Department in its submission to the Review. This is not because I think these views will necessarily be accepted but because they reflect my Department's views about future direction for its own services and, I believe, a substantial body of opinion in Victoria.

The Department's proposals to the Review of Early Childhood Services are based on *three* broad goals:

- the availability of care and developmental opportunities for children;
- the availability of support and developmental opportunities for families;
- the availability of supportive networks for children and their families.

The Department has identified 17 separate programs which are, or should be, pursuing these goals — 17 programs which have a primary function of assisting families and local communities to provide care, nurture and developmental opportunities for young children. The programs include infant welfare day care centres, day nurseries, family day care, out-of-school-hours care, early childhood development programs, family support and foster care.

The cost of these programs to Commonwealth and State governments in 1981/82 was \$75 million. This is excluding the substantial contribution made by local government and other agencies.

Detailed analysis shows how narrowly each program is defined. Program objectives are not integrated and there is a multiplicity of funding and administrative arrangements. This serves to emphasise the difference rather than the similarity between programs.

The result on the ground is a range of normally high-quality, but single-purpose services which are unevenly distributed and often poorly coordinated. This means simply that Victorian families are receiving less adequate services than existing resources could and should provide.

My Department believes that these programs should be drawn together formally by the establishment of a new Victorian Family and Children's Services Program. Such a Program would emphasise the strong inter-relationship between services within the Program and would address the following critical issues:

- the establishment of a coherent and consistent basis for planning;
- the efficient and effective administration of family and children's services which includes public scrutiny of decision making;
- the coordination and integration of family and children's services both through the Program itself and through affirmation of the principle of neighbourhood-based services;
- the need to ensure provision of opportunities for community involvement in decision making about family and children's services.

In its submissions, the Department of Community Welfare Services has made detailed recommendations about the roles and responsibilities of government and non-government agencies at the different levels of activity. It also spells out the appropriate State level administrative arrangements and proposals for the implementation of the Program at State and regional levels. These proposals include the introduction of program components, the establishment of planning and consultative mechanisms and attention to the resolution of Federal/State issues in family and children's services.

All of these factors are critical in the effective operation and development of family and children's services in Victoria. However, the Department is convinced that real progress towards the goals I have outlined can only take place with a great deal of input at the level of service delivery — local communities across Victoria.

It is clear that in Victoria in particular, local government has a vital role to play in assisting children and their families to receive the support they need. I say Victoria in particular because in this State the role of local government both in human services and more generally is more developed than in other States. For example, local government in Victoria sponsors 40 per cent of all Federally funded child care projects, one third of all kindergartens and all infant welfare services. In some areas large amounts of money are committed to human services by local government, and many municipalities are actively involved in the coordination and integration of services for families and children.

This issue of local government involvement in human services is

currently being examined not only by the Review of Early Childhood Services but also, and more particularly, by the Human Services Program Sub-Committee of the Premier's Department. This committee is examining ways of implementing the devolution of human services to local government and is about to present its final report to the Premier.

I note Frank Maas's and Jim Alexander's suspicions about State government's motivations for promoting localisation and the role of local government in human services — that is, human services on the cheap. I think, and hope, that these suspicions will be allayed by a detailed examination of the Human Services Program Report when it is available. I do not think, and my Department does not think, that local community based services are a cheap alternative. On the contrary to facilitate effective community processes and adequate services at the local level may need a commitment of additional resources. What I do know is that what we are doing in family and children's services, at the moment, is not working nearly as well as it should. I also know from a range of research findings, from my own practical experience in community service development in a local government Authority, and from simple common sense, that parents and children need support services which are accessible and responsive to their needs, which are integrated and which are developed in such a way that they allow users to develop and extend their own informal networks of support.

Further, I think we already know a great deal about how to develop these services.

The challenge for decision makers, researchers and community members, the audience of this seminar, is to bury parochialism, territoriality and fear of change, and to work cooperatively to ensure that Victorian children and their families receive the sort of services they need.

A definition of 'community based' from a practical perspective

BEV LONG*

Over the past eight to nine years there has been a commitment by some of the workers in the area I am employed in, to work within a community development framework. This area is in part of the inner urban region and has two high-rise Housing Commission estates as its main features. The workers believe that residents have the right

- to be involved in planning;
- to form supportive relationships;
- to be involved in the ongoing development and management of services, and to be involved with their children within a service, if they choose to be;
- to have available services that are accessible to newcomers to the area and to existing services and supports which work together to ensure that resources are used effectively.

It was recognised that parents, local community members and children themselves have a right to control the decisions which affect their own immediate environment. Implicit within this philosophy is a recognition of the fact that the process of the community assuming responsibility about decision making and control is an educative process which takes time. Services should recognise that the handing over of skills and knowledge between professional workers and the community is an essential first step. At this point, continued support of a group is essential until such time as a group has the confidence to act as a totally autonomous body directly controlled and responsible to its membership.

Management committees are therefore comprised of a majority of local residents and users of the service. Decisions as to functioning of services and policy decisions were canvassed as widely as possible and parent users of the service are always encouraged and afforded the opportunity to be involved at all levels of the groups activity, from formulation of policy to cooking lunches.

This empowering process has been of tremendous benefit to the community in the area and as a result there are a number of well established child care and family support services. All of these are run by parent cooperatives or parent management committees. The exception to these are the services run by the City Council, one voluntary agency, and those run by the State government.

The parent-run services are largely providing a primary level service, and some will argue that it is more feasible at this level to have parents involved in management. However, we are also currently establishing a new Foster Care Program which will in the long term have a user/resident/worker management committee. This service is attempting to combine the traditional aspects of 24 hour care within a community development model.

The benefits to this community of working in a community development model can be summarised as follows:

- The services are more likely to reflect the need. If management is local and involves the residents of the area, then people will know what is needed and try to structure the service to meet the needs. For example, in one particular service, when a staff position became vacant, a worker from a significant ethnic group was employed. This has resulted in an increase of users of that service by that ethnic group. Other services are doing likewise.
- There is local accountability. Management must be open to questioning from the consumers and residents; they cannot hide behind bureaucracy and red tape.
- There is a process of empowerment. In the past people have felt a sense of alienation and a lack of feeling for their community or of belonging to a particular service. Through participation in a service, people can learn new skills and increase their confidence and self-esteem. Relationships with each other and their children often improve. Some people may also move on and take part in other aspects of community life within their own area. Strong leadership from many residents can be found.
- Services are more responsive to change and innovation which can take place more swiftly when decisions are made locally.
- Communities are taking more responsibility for their own lives. Learning to participate in the management of a service often increases a person's sense of responsibility for their own caring, growth, setting limits, and so forth. For years people have passed over responsibility to professionals for various aspects of their children's lives, in education, medicine, protection. Where there is a strong sense of community, then the community takes more responsibility for itself.

Community-managed services reflect the value of people having control over their own lives and ability to determine those things which affect them, in contrast to having services and conditions imposed on them.

When we came to establish the Foster Care Program, considerable time was spent in working through how a so-called secondary/tertiary service would fit in with what we already had. The following are some of the factors we considered.

Within our community there is a whole group of people who are culturally, socially and economically deprived, and there are a number of factors which operate to perpetuate this situation.

We believe that these people are positively discriminated against in areas such as education, housing, employment, health, transport and legal rights. This discrimination means that family life is often disrupted or destroyed because families are not able to fulfill the caring functions even as basic as feeding, clothing and sheltering children. Families are often under stress because they lack security in areas such as accommodation and finances. Stresses such as illness, school and celebration times such as birthdays and Christmas can result in crisis situations when families are deprived and do not have what they need.

Because with Foster Care we are working in the area of relocation of services, there is a trap in thinking that if we had more of everything we would come to grips with the problems facing these communities. While there is an urgent need for all types of placements for children in our area, it must be recognised that an over-abundance of 'services' will foster dependence and passivity and weaken the activities of people to think, to organise and take collective responsibility for the problems they are faced with.

Criticisms often levelled at community managed services

We are aware that there is often criticism levelled at community managed services for some of the following reasons:

Lack of ability to respond to innovations and new ideas

In our area the community continues to respond to innovations and new ideas. Evidence of this is revealed in the number of services in the area compared with services in nearby suburbs, and in the ongoing development within the services:

- one of the first submissions for a community health centre came from our area;
- there are financial counsellors and a youth accommodation service and a community legal service;

- FOCUS, a community based foster care/emergency and short-term 24 hour care program;
- after-school programs;
- an adventure playground;
- Kenco, a work cooperative;
- eight Child Care Centres

Insufficient accountability to government

Community based services win hands down on local accountability issues, to users, residents and to funders. It is recognised that there are tensions which often exist between local groups and government departments, particularly State and Federal Departments. We believe this is for the following reasons:

- bureaucratic red tape
- the complexity of questionnaires*
- the use of professional language
- the lack of translated information in relevant languages
- the complexity of rules and regulations for the establishment of children's services, particularly those for which the Victorian Health Commission has responsibility. Some are out-of-date and are inconsistent from one similar service to another.
- the complexity of funding arrangements — this increases where funds come into one service from three different levels of government.
- the cost of auditing.

Open conflict between people in locally managed services

When there are open structures within a service, conflict will therefore be more out in the open. It must not be denied that conflict also exists between professionals and other workers within a voluntary agency or a government department. The only advantage, perhaps, is that this conflict is hidden and may be the reason for a high turnover of staff if there are no mechanisms for resolving it. We recognise that part of the reason for conflict within an organisation is caused by a lack of sufficient resources particularly for the purposes of administration. Often management committees become so preoccupied and burdened by administrative tasks that policy and planning are pushed aside and members become disgruntled or alienated from involvement in the management and operation of the service. In this process, people invest a considerable amount of themselves, so much so that when criticism is levelled at 'their' service, they take it very personally to the point of not listening to new ideas or constructive input.

* Figures from questionnaires, particularly those collected for government departments, are rarely fed back to the service or the local area. People often question this form of accountability, that is, that government is not accountable to the organisation. These figures, if fed back to the local area, could assist with future planning and the rationalisation of services.

Only neighbourhood or primary services should be managed by local people

We believe that secondary services can successfully incorporate local residents and users of the service, in planning and management tasks. The new foster and overnight care program currently being established is attempting to do this. We further believe that this provides an opportunity for local people to extend their responsibilities particularly in decisions about their children's lives.

We believe there are many ways people can be involved in this kind of service, for example in providing support for foster parents and natural parents, offering assistance with transport, baby sitting, training and information sessions, and in commenting on policy where it is being formed within a service, in conjunction with workers. Being involved in a range of activities around a service often leads to an increasing involvement, which may promote an interest in the management of the service.

It is further proposed that this new service, that is, providing overnight, emergency, short-term and eventually long-term foster care, will be available to any parent in this community who has a need for this type of care. In the past, foster care services have focused on those people in greatest need; therefore a stigma has become attached to these and other tertiary services. We are committed to breaking down some of this stigma by involving people, as much as possible, in all aspects of the service.

Unskilled people have limited capacity to manage services

How do you know, unless you give them a go? Of all the criticism levelled at so-called 'unskilled' people, this is the most unfair. It never ceases to amaze me what 'unskilled' people can do if they are given the opportunity. It is so easy to say the people we need to help manage this or that service do not exist in a particular community, therefore, in the meantime, we will manage the service ourselves. Of course it takes time and resources and we may begin by asking people to do very simple tasks. It can also mean that where an organisation has skilled people or resources, they may choose to use them to transfer skills in a variety of ways.

The need for adequate resources

The community development model requires considerable resourcing to catalyse interest, implement services and maintain a viable level of skills within an organisation. We recommend that the following resources and conditions are necessary to implement and maintain the level of services and development.

Sufficient time and assistance where new structures need to be developed

When an existing service is being asked to incorporate user/resident management committees it must be recognised that this process takes time and resources. People need to develop skills and knowledge about management procedures. If too much is expected of them too quickly, people can be frightened away.

Adequate consultancy and advisory services

Local groups, those established and those in early establishment stages, need access to consultant and advisory services. Paid staff are needed to carry out the decisions of committees eg. administration, book keeping, etc. Mobile consultants with expertise in understanding group dynamics, administration, financial accounting, auditing information and knowledge of a variety of models of management would be one way of providing this assistance. Funding is also needed to continue to employ catalysts or enablers such as children's services development officers, community development workers and the like to ensure groups have access to information and support.

Outreach community work by staff in centres provide a link between the child care centres and the community, particularly where people are isolated either geographically or by alienating surroundings. An outreach person would encourage participation and help break down barriers related to 'professionalism'.

More flexibility in funding from government departments

Funding guidelines need to incorporate more flexibility, especially where a service wishes to integrate a further service into a centre. Presently, because of government policy, some services cannot be integrated because one government department cannot fund where another government department is already funding a part, or all of a service. For example, a foster care program cannot incorporate a component for disabled children, as funds for a worker cannot be paid into a service already receiving funds from another government department. This arrangement has the potential to cause unnecessary duplication, where a separate service would need to be developed parallel to an existing one.

Adequate consultation arrangements for forward planning and changes to existing arrangements

It is crucial that there be adequate arrangements for consultations when new services/facilities are being planned or where changes are needed in existing services. The need for consultation applies to government

departments, voluntary agencies, councils, and community groups. The consultation needs to take place with both residents/parents and workers in their own local area. This would ensure that services are planned and delivered in accordance with the wishes of local people and that they are integrated within existing services.

Summary

I have discussed the benefits I have seen in the community in which I work, of working within a community development model, the criticisms we encounter and the resources we need to make it work. This process of empowerment of the individual and the development of a strong community base, is crucial to the well-being of a community.

Many of the families in our area feel comfortable about seeking out the service they need. But if, as the Geelong study points out, families seeking a professional service feel embarrassment, shame, humiliation, loss of self-esteem and confidence, and if they feel this may show up their failures, inferiorities and incompetencies; and if these feelings of indebtedness and inequity are also a factor inhibiting help-seeking, because people feel unable to repay the helper and see the helper as in a position to gain power over them, then I suggest that it is time for a change to services that are non-stigmatising and comfortable and where those receiving a service feel they have some control.

Thoughts and experiences of community based services in the context of the Family Support Services Program

COLIN KENT*

After first being approached to present my thoughts and experiences on community based services for families and children I was very conscious of my limited exposure to the wider issues involved. I consider my involvement with the Family Support Services Program as providing me with a rather narrow perspective, as the majority of my personal experiences have centred around one component of that 'program' — that is financial counselling.

I hope that my contribution, while potentially narrow in focus, will have wider implications and form part of the necessary dialogue/debate which needs to take place. For I believe my experiences in a non-metropolitan area or 'country Victoria' have significant implications for policy makers and service planners, often whose concepts and programs leave behind the very communities they are wishing to involve and enhance.

Meredith Sussex has alluded to the lack of direction and planning evident in the original Family Support Services Program indicated by the fact that goals built into the program were often contradictory, for example the need for services to be 'discriminatory and categorical' yet part of 'universalist community services'. The Office of Child Care declared that the family support pilot scheme should be preventative as well as concerned with needs, priorities and service efficiency. The conflict between a remedial goal of providing alternatives to family breakdown and institutionalisation and the development goal means a range of family support is still largely unresolved. Competing 'rational' models lead sometimes to rather irrational compromises. A typical

* Coordinator, Budgetary Advisory Service, Barwon region, Victoria

result is to take a number of different goals on board and leave it to service planners and practitioners to slog it out to find which goal or goals win the day.

As well as competition between competing service modes, there is some competition between community controlled, locally based service provision and provision through voluntary welfare agencies. Family support services have been provided under a variety of auspices, although the most common have been community groups and voluntary agencies who lobbied for programmatic family counselling — a service that tends to also be remedial and complementary to the role played in voluntary welfare agencies by family aides. To use a phrase of one of the architects of family support services pushing for a preventative rather than a remedial program, 'Family support services have been captured by the voluntary agencies'.

The components of family support services in nearly half of all funded projects tend to be just another service in multi-service agencies for multi-problem families.

Both of these issues have combined to create a range of auspices emphasising sometimes different program goals and using various modes of service delivery. Thus I am convinced the word 'diversity' was coined specifically for the Family Support Service Program.

Current operation

Given the confusion of goals and diversity of auspice, how do family support services operate? What do they actually do?

Following Trudy Wyse, who undertook an evaluation of family support services in order to assess the effectiveness of the program, it is possible to review the content of the projects under three headings: firstly, services to families in difficulty (remedial); secondly, preventative services to consumers; and third, advocacy and social action.

According to Wyse, emergency housing services at the time and financial counselling services clearly attempted to work at all three levels. Both services had an educational focus, providing information to consumers, as well as collecting information on inadequacies in the housing market, the loan market and credit legislation — resulting in exploitation and over-indebtedness of consumers.

Financial counsellors have played an active role in campaigning for changes in credit legislation, the establishment of a credit legal service, community credit unions and food co-operatives, and lobbying government and effectively using the media to educate the public on credit.

However, combining the tasks of crisis work, education and social action is not at all easy. Doubts were raised by service providers concerning the legitimacy of workers undertaking advocacy and social action in the face of high demands on their time for crisis type work and a lack of encouragement from the regional or central offices of the

Department of Community Welfare Services (DCWS). Parts of the Department were no doubt more comfortable with workers who got on with casework rather than engaging in political action, which often flowed over into criticisms of the Department of Community Welfare Services.

According to Trudy Wyse's evaluation, family aides have generally focused their time and attention on remedial work with families in difficulty rather than preventative work in social action/advocacy. Although there has not been much time to evaluate the operation of the family counselling sub-program, it would appear to suffer from the same problem as family aides — tending towards being remedial in nature, focusing on family inadequacies and tarred with the 'welfare' brush. The new guidelines for these 'specialist and discriminatory' family counselling services reinforce this opinion, and I find it extremely difficult to see how, with such remedial goals reaffirmed, they are going to be able to make linkages with locally available universal services in a 'non-stigmatising environment'.

It is of note that seven family counselling agencies are in local government, and it will be interesting to know if those services can retain a non-stigmatising, universal focus. For Sunshine City Council, at least, this is clearly the intention, the service being closely integrated into the range of universal services.

For other services and voluntary agencies, the Department's new rationale for funding which was released at the end of 1982 has significantly altered the thrust of funding guidelines to favour local government auspices and locally controlled, developmental services.

While the new rationale speaks consistently of the need to integrate family support services with existing community based services, the criteria for funding with such wide notions as crisis intervention, needs based funding, innovation, prevention, community accountability, cultural relevance and localism — again places before the service planner or practitioner a wild host of competing notions and goals.

The essential difference this time is that the rules of the game have changed. It will remain to see whether the players can adapt or whether the game will just continue on as it previously did.

The key elements in the new rationale are those of process. It is this parameter which should underlie family support services in Victoria. Enabling people to cope better through transferring information, resources and skills is a process. The process of enabling or empowering provides people with the skills and confidence to decide for themselves how to cope with the 'system' and survive as best they can. It is critical that the family support services are seen as progressive in empowering the most disadvantaged groups in the community.

The rationale details well the necessary guidelines to be incorporated around the focus. It does not however recognise the qualitative difference between community based services and self-help. The latter needs to be recognised as an important 'empowering' process that should be accommodated within the Family Support Services Program.

It is an appropriate time to lay the basic building blocks to redirect Family Support Services.

The new rationale has clearly started that process, requiring family support services to have local government endorsement and be integrated with other services. However, many issues still need to be confronted to enable the process to be achieved.

Problems of implementation

While integration with locally based services is clearly important, it is also important not to exclude other relevant auspices such as self-help groups, community groups and community health centres. Larger voluntary agencies are likely to lose most under the new guidelines. They are clearly obliged to make strong links with local government and introduce clearer accountability structures that incorporate the community and their users. In some local government areas, the change needed will be great.

Although municipal officers jumped to support the devolution of welfare services to local government following the Bains Report, it is quite obvious that the process of implementation is going to run into difficulty with many councils. Especially in country areas, few councils have a true appreciation of local needs and some even seem reticent to learn, fearing that they might be asked to respond in some way. Most are fearful of involvement which might lead to an ongoing or increasing financial commitment.

The accountability of local government to its service users will also need to be examined in order to ensure that the community receives qualitative improvement, and not just a transfer of auspice.

However, in some country regions with poorly developed local government services, there may be little option to accepting the existing role of voluntary agencies who have often developed a good relationship with local government, although not necessarily developmental or accountable to users.

It is worth noting that a number of voluntary agencies are making genuine attempts to devolve power within their family support services projects or agencies to the community by proceeding to involve service users in management committees. However, it is only natural that accusations of 'tokenism' might continue to be levelled against them. Some voluntary agencies are going to have to consider the surrender of both management and resources to the community. However competing value positions with regard to 'professionalism' may hamper this process.

It is also interesting to note at a regional level the mixed messages that can filter through to the agencies or services. In one instance a community based family support service was recently being encouraged by the regional Department of Community Welfare Services to move to a larger voluntary agency auspice in order to assure the service's financial viability.

ity. Given the current funding rationale, one should have almost expected the opposite to have occurred.

One of the other issues relating to the new rationale is the seeming contradiction between the developmental focus of the rationale and the residual emphasis which comes later in the funding criteria. It would seem that stress, crisis and need stand out and are ranked as the predominant criteria, while the capacity of an organisation to contribute to a developmental or preventative focus is not considered to warrant mention.

It is no wonder in my experience that not only agencies/service providers are confused about goals, but that regional centre staff, RCCs and funding sub-committees and review staff have so often overstressed the importance of our case work and statistics. Conservative values, particularly in country areas, are going to continue to dominate service delivery patterns, and the response of local government or certain sections of the local community may in actual fact not represent the true needs within the community.

Clearly if services with a view to highlighting gaps in national or state wide services/policy are delivered to local government, there is a need for strong information networks across the State to share and aggregate information and keep structural overviews clearly in mind.

Thus the continued funding by the Department of Community Welfare Services of coordinating bodies, such as the Financial Counsellors Association and their executive officer position, are important to the continuing process of ensuring developmental services with a broader involvement in related social issues.

The new rationale also suggests the integration of family support services with universal community services provided at local level, such as infant welfare services, home help, and playgroups, while clearly maintaining a needs-based Family Support Services Program. I believe that this would not achieve 'equity of opportunity' with respect to rich and poor families seeking the same advice, because of the differing capacities to pay and the second class nature of a 'welfarised' service within a range of universal services.

I would like to add that our local financial counselling service has continued to take a universal focus, which we feel has been one of the contributing reasons to a 'successful' mounting of our preventative role, both at an individual and group level. We discarded the meagre criteria of 'family' and the notion of 'at risk' and have found that many people from all socio-economic backgrounds have sought advice and support, not when a crisis is experienced, but when future important decisions, which might affect their long term stability, are being made.

Future directions

The concept of a Family Support Services Program tailored to incorporate new worthwhile projects that meet community needs is useful and

worth retaining. However, as a result of the continuing recession demand for crisis intervention is likely to increase, confounding the task of shifting away from a remedial to a preventative approach.

What guidelines are necessary to ensure that future Family Support Services are *universal, locally based and controlled, integrated with local services and developmental in focus?*

First and foremost — resources are needed. Community involvement depends on community resources. As Martin Mowbray points out, devolution of responsibility without resources to local communities amounts to exploitation.

While the new rationale has developed guidelines to maximise the likelihood of local government and local government endorsed community groups being Family Support Scheme auspices, the funding criteria do not complement that aim. Rather than making a commitment to ensuring adequate funding for Family Support Scheme workers or to additional funding for community based groups that clearly have no additional resources to call on, the funding criteria include:

- 'Funding is on a subsidy basis and agencies are expected to contribute some of the costs of the service.'
- '(With) equity in government funding, different agencies providing similar services should receive a similar level of support.'

While the first criterion simply reflects an ongoing departmental position and the second helps reduce 'pork barrelling', together they are bad news for impoverished but valuable community based services or self-help groups, and are likely to lead either to local government being forced to pick up funding — laying the DCWS open to a claim of passing on responsibility without resources, as can be levelled at the Federal government — or to exploitation of community based services that the DCWS is trying to promote.

To counter this, the DCWS needs to accept the special funding needs of small community based groups, through equitable formula-based funding which recognises specific differences.

In 1981 Wyse recommended that funding should be based on a three-year program with funding to accommodate inflation and overheads, and standard awards for Family Support Services workers. Those recommendations are as valid as ever, and are principles which need to be adopted on a much wider scale. These need the endorsement of the DCWS.

Secondly, local community groups need adequate *support and skills* to assist developing community management, particularly during the initiation stage.

If the rhetoric within the rationale is to be believed, there needs to be commitment of resources to make community based or self-help projects work.

The involvement of people with low self-esteem and who lack power over information, relationships and resources does not just happen. It takes a commitment, and people with an understanding of working

with people; it needs transferring skills and resources, and linking people into a supportive network. Unless there is a commitment to funding that involves such people in local community processes, the stated commitment to accountability to the community and to users rings rather hollow.

What is clear in trying to shift the focus to user and community participation, is that it is a slow, difficult process requiring resources and skills. These skills can probably be increased through tapping the groups involved in empowering and social action. For example, workshops with the collective of self-help groups or community child care would probably benefit many Family Support Scheme workers wishing to implement the new guidelines and wanting to establish structures to ensure accountability to users and to the community.

Unless there are resources provided and concrete steps taken to initiate changes in existing service delivery, there is unlikely to be much change in existing services as a result of the new rationale.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is much work needed to translate the new Family Support Scheme rationale into practical terms. Seminars and workshops with resource groups are necessary to make inroads into actually implementing 'community control', 'accountability' to users and 'using information for social action'.

They are difficult concepts to apply and in danger of becoming quite meaningless in practice unless resources and support are provided to Family Support Scheme agencies to incorporate them in their programs.

The Family Support Scheme is into a new era, and likely to continue to change rapidly. It requires much clearer administrative mechanisms, much better consultation and much sharper focus on preventative locally based services under a variety of auspices.

Note

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by John Dickson's document entitled *The Operation of Family Support Services in Victoria (1977-82): implications and proposals for policy* and his agreement to the use of various phrases and concepts throughout this article.

HOBART

Friday 8 July 1983

Program

Chair David Keane

Acting Director
Institute of Family Studies

Opening the Hon. John Cleary MP

Minister for Community Welfare and the Elderly

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families

Frank Maas
Institute of Family Studies

Family support services

Jim Alexander
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Social support and access to services in an Australian community

Peter d'Abbs
Institute of Family Studies

Families' access to and use of support networks — some case studies

Jean McCaughey
Institute of Family Studies

Chair Peta Fitzgibbon

Tasmania's approach to community based services

Dennis Daniels
Director for Community Welfare

Community perspectives

Bridgewater/Gagebrook Neighbourhood House
Sue King, Coordinator

Low income problem service

Philip Morris
Truda Korber

Forum — all speakers

Close and summation

Community based services — a Departmental perspective

DENNIS DANIELS*

I believe that every government department should have some kind of stated mission, whether it is expressed as broadly as 'good health for all' or 'the protection of life and property' or in some more detailed way. Such broad objectives, whilst representing the ideal situation, do provide some standard against which its organisation, developments and services can be measured.

The Department for Community Welfare mission is simply expressed in its 1981 Annual Report:

The Department recognises the welfare of the individual as the basis of the welfare of the Tasmanian community and ultimately the wider society of which we are a part. It is further recognised that most individuals are either members of families, or have been so for important parts of their lives. Financial hardships, societal pressures, marital conflict, disturbed relationships between individuals, between parents, and between parents and children, can impair the functioning of individuals, and of families. The State has a responsibility both *directly* and *indirectly*, to enhance the functioning and self-esteem of individuals, to assist in the preservation, strengthening or restoration of the family unit, and to mitigate the effects of such disruptions where they have occurred.

The broad objective of the Department is therefore to enable individuals and families who require help to function in society to the best of their ability, and to preserve, strengthen and where possible restore the family unit, by counselling, advising and assisting families and individuals in need, and by *identifying* and *developing* community support. Individuals needing help should be treated with dignity and respect, and the attitude of staff should be one of caring and acceptance.

* Director for Community Welfare, Tasmania

The aim of the administrative and clerical divisions of the organisation is to enable the service provision areas to function effectively, at the same time ensuring proper accountability and sound management.

The emphasis on the family within this statement is not made to the exclusion of individual or community needs. Rather, a careful reading of the objectives of the Department reveals an attempt to integrate the interest of the child, the family, the individual and the community, outside of any hierarchical definition.

I would like to take my comment on the family just a little further since the Institute paper seems to derive from a view that is somewhat sceptical of the family as an institution.

I believe that social and economic policies should continue to emphasise the importance of the family as the most desirable setting not only for the nurturing, upbringing and socialisation of children, but as the grouping within which many of us, as well as those at present outside the 'family', will best be able to have our emotional and material needs met. That is family in its several forms. I believe that the face of the family is changing as a dynamic response to the pressures upon it and, rather than demonstrating any irrelevance, is proving its resilience and continued viability. The family should be supported and encouraged to continue its social and emotional functions and recruited to assist in the normalisation of individuals who find themselves out of 'family'.

For example, programs such as 'Stretch-a-Family', a New South Wales program which exists to provide for homeless youth. Single persons are fostering and adopting special needs children — that's family! Fostering or care within family can be designed to provide full-time care or respite care for the aged — that's family!

Unless we maintain a family emphasis on what we are saying and doing, I believe there are real dangers in some of the current agency or community responses to social problems, like homelessness, becoming as residual and institutionalised, as patronising and inflexible, as practices of the past.

Strategies to ensure increased government responsibility can be predicated around the concept of the family as an economic unit entrusted with economic responsibilities that are of crucial importance to the welfare and progress of society. However, its economic base is narrow and fragile. The assumption, then, that families ought to be able to look after their own is based on the erroneous belief that ours is a simple, stable and relatively unchanging society. The reality is that society is one of tremendously complex interdependence between its members and is characterised by irregular, unpredictable growth and change. The source of society's opulence is its complexity. The welfare of a family living in a community depends on the way a community handles its affairs. Industrialisation, urbanisation, recession, media and commercial exploitation are beyond the control of the family. Social security, child care and family services ought to be seen as compensation for 'dis-welfares' caused by impacts of policies against which families are relatively powerless, as well as maintenance of a unit of economic and social importance.

The Department as a service deliverer sees itself inextricably linked to the community, and a provider and support mechanism to community based services.

The Department has 12 offices or service locations within the State. There is a strong emphasis on field visiting by some 70 general practitioner welfare staff. Honorary officers are employed in remote areas like King Island, and we utilise the facilities of other agencies, for example council chambers, to ensure regular visiting services and contact points in places like Smithton in the north-west, and Scottsdale in the north-east. The general practitioner model means that a multiplicity of needs can be met through the one worker. The field officer inevitably builds up a considerable body of knowledge on government and community services, client rights, and so forth. In a recent review of the issuing of emergency relief I found that in nearly every case the interviewing officer (field officer on office duty) was able to provide the client with additional information or advice. This advocacy, information provision, or the creating of pathways to other services, is seldom recognised when one overviews family and community services, but the localised public welfare agency as a source of information, advocacy, and help contributes significantly to individual and community well-being. It is a worry to me that present staffing restraints may force us to reconsider the field officers' work-load and their ability, in the light of statutory responsibilities, to continue this role, a role taken for granted but not within their statutory obligations. Naturally the referral network established means that many departmental clients find their way to agencies, including community based services. *It would be unfortunate if the 'welfare' referred client was to find himself or herself categorised in a particular way by the reception agency.*

The Department also employs a number of specialised staff, for example child care consultants and consultant social workers, who liaise with community groups, providing advice and support and actively encouraging the development of services by informing groups of funding sources, providing help in the development of submissions and opening and maintaining channels of communication. I should say that community groups in Tasmania seem to have little difficulty in gaining access to senior staff, including the Deputy Director, who is immediately responsible to the Departmental Head for Grants Programs.

Programs assuming an increasing importance for the Department are those involving grants to community organisations. The proportion of the departmental budget directed towards this area has increased from approximately seven per cent to 17 per cent in 5 years. The amount allocated in 1982-83 was \$1.64 million. As well, the Department passed on to community agencies Commonwealth funds amounting to \$300 000.

The Department has a responsibility (increasingly being overseen through audit requirements) of assuring the government that funds allocated to the private sector have been properly spent. In an environment of increasing levels of need and increasing scrutiny of the spending of the welfare dollar, it is important to ensure that funded

programs complement and do not duplicate existing services. This has necessitated the development of grant guidelines and procedures for the separate programs. Its responsibilities aside, the Department sees the required accountability as being necessary to protect all community programs and to maintain their credibility in the political and governmental budgetary sphere.

A significant proportion of these funds are directed to community based organisations in the belief that developmental and preventative services operated and in many cases conceived by the local community can be more sensitive to people's needs and more effective in meeting them.

In its recent report to Parliament the Department indicated an overall welfare strategy comprising three interrelated levels of service, primary assistance (remedial and rehabilitation), secondary (preventive) and tertiary assistance (development perspectives). The description of the tertiary area again indicates the way the Department sees its linking and contribution to the community services:

At this third level the Department will continue to contribute to the provision of services directed towards social enhancement and the strengthening and development of families and individuals and the provision of broad community welfare services which link persons in need of care with available social facilities and resources. In this sense there is a bridge between primary and tertiary assistance, between formal and informal services.

Examples of this developmental perspective are the neighbourhood houses and child care programs. The objectives of the neighbourhood program, for example, are to provide for the development of locally based services, to encourage participation in the planning and management of these services and to provide a point of contact with formal government-operated services. Self-sufficiency and self-direction are key words in relation to this program, and it is hoped the development of neighbourhood houses will help families, individuals and groups identify and solve their own problems, thereby preventing dependence on government services. Already there are 14 such programs at various stages of development in the State. Existing houses now provide a wide range of community services such as recreational activities; child care; fitness classes; life-skill classes; adult education programs; meeting facilities; community newsletters; effective parenting services; food co-ops; ante-natal clinics; and community skill courses. It is pleasing to see an increasing high rate of usage of these programs.

We do not see community based services as substituting for direct government provision. However there should be mutual recognition of the roles to be played by more informally based services and formal departmental services.

In presenting this paper on the State Community Welfare's role in the community and concept of community based services our interest, then, is not out of a retreat from responsibility because of times of recession, as is suggested might be the case, but out of a genuine commitment to community welfare.

The Department sees consultation, coordination and participation as central to the concept of community welfare. Commitment to the well-being of the entire community means a commitment to promoting independence, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and self-confidence in individuals and communities. Volunteerism at the local level is an important ingredient. The Department believes it is essential for it to promote the evolution of structures which will allow people to participate in decisions which affect their lives and which will commit the Department to wide and genuine consultation with all sections of the community. It sees community based services as being one way of achieving this ideal.

This kind of departmental thinking has been around for some years and some projects were conceived if not given birth to long before the present recession. Indeed it is out of experience in affluent times, which lead social welfare administrators across this country to re-appraise the residual approach in helping low-income families and disadvantaged communities. It has always been recognised, as Mr Alexander has picked up in his paper, that the devolution of welfare and support services back to the family and the community carry the danger of placing an unrealistic burden of responsibility and cost on those communities and individuals. Further, there is, in my opinion, a need to safeguard and protect the rights of those receiving service at the community level.

It was those cautions which we articulated during early discussions about State involvement in the Commonwealth Family Support Service (FSS) program. We also argued that in particularly disadvantaged communities or new communities like housing estates the State ought to be able to use FSS funds to put in programs where there was no cohesive or articulate community group on the understanding that the program would eventually be transferred to a community based organisation. This sort of concern has led to more active marketing of the program and involvement of staff in getting FSS programs into areas like the West Coast, Circular Head and the Fingal Valley.

It is indeed unfortunate that recent developments have come at a time of financial restraint, and we find some of the comments in the papers understandable if not acceptable. For instance, the de-institutionalisation program the Department has adopted is not a 'cost-efficient scramble' in this State. Our argument with some voluntary agencies *re* the institutionalisation of children goes back some 20 years. In regard to our own institutions we have never been over-institutionalised; two institutions, one of which was a girls' training centre, closed down after a relatively short life. These rationalisation programs have been on the drawing board for some years. De-institutionalisation has been accompanied by the development of resources which are more than compensatory.

Returning to the issue of community based services, I recognise that as the major primary welfare service provider in the State, the Department has a responsibility to develop its services, for example in regard to special needs groups, crisis intervention services, and alternatives to

residential care. It is limited to the extent it can do this by its restricted legislative mandate and the problem of resources. While I have talked about a welfare structure on three levels, it is the first level of primary assistance for which the Department has prime responsibility and accountability. You can therefore have a problem of competition for resources across the three levels. That is why the interrelationship between primary intervention, preventive services and community based services is so important.

It was never envisaged that community based services would replace departmental services or responsibilities, but rather add to what we were able to provide as well as enhance communities in which families and individuals, many of whom fall within the eligibility category for departmental services, live. For example, while a family is assisted through crisis intervention, one would hope that beyond this they could be linked into community, neighbourhood, or volunteer services for ongoing support. Hopefully given time the gradual development of neighbourhood and community services will make it unnecessary for many families to seek traditional government services. There has been some evidence of this already in child care programs. However, isn't this what it's all about.

It is not possible to maintain a rigid division between services offered by community based groups and government departments. A fully effective network of services would be one where informal community based services provide a bridge into and out of formal and more specialised services. It would be our desire to encourage this by the continued support to community based services of our consultant officers as well as the active involvement of field office staff in utilising such facilities and acting as contact persons for community based personnel and clients.

I trust I have said enough to demonstrate the departmental *will*. It is this *will* which should assure services of their continued place in the community, governmental support, and consistent policy regardless of the uncertain times and conditions in which we find ourselves.

Community based services as seen from the experience in Bridgewater and Gagebrook

SUE KING*

The housing sub-division of Bridgewater and Gagebrook stands as a reminder to what has been appropriately referred to as 'a folly of broad acre development'. Bridgewater and Gagebrook are four kilometres apart and are separate communities. The sub-division consists of 1 800 houses. The residents of 1 200 or 60 per cent of these houses receive pensions or benefits. On the basis of this statistic, it is not unrealistic to identify Bridgewater and Gagebrook as a welfare community.

The Bridgewater Neighbourhood House has been operational for five years, the Gagebrook Neighbourhood Centre for 33 days. Both centres offer a range of Commonwealth and State funded community based services, including family support and children's services.

Last November a misappropriation occurred through the Bridgewater Neighbourhood House. Eight months later the Bridgewater House has emerged intact and politically aware.

Against a background of many months dealing with policy makers, government officers, police, lawyers, politicians, local government and other community agencies, we have developed a capacity for criticism. Against the background of the difficulties and learning of these past months, we wish to specifically focus upon two policy areas that we believe impinge upon the quality of community based service delivery and the impact of these policies upon a community group in crisis. The policies in question are: the theory and anomalies of the policy of localism, and the theory and anomalies of the policy of volunteerism.

The theory of localism is that communities are encouraged by the provision of government grants to provide a range of community based

* Coordinator, Bridgewater/Gagebrook Neighbourhood House, Tasmania

services. Such services can include food cooperatives, home maker services, child care, employment programs, transport, and legal referral. Localisation means that communities identify those services considered most appropriate to their needs. The neighbourhood house concept is one response to the needs of a community wanting access to information, support networks, child care and educational opportunities.

To maintain that, implicit in the concept of localism is the autonomy of community groups. The right to administer grants determines methods of implementing community based services to maximise community access to those services. Our assumption is based on the encouragement given to community groups to incorporate, therefore assuming legal accountability for their grants and programs.

Against this theoretical notion, we wish to discuss an obvious anomaly: the role of local government. In Tasmania local government involvement in community development is stated ministerial policy. On this basis, who then assumes responsibility for the grants and for the direction of the community service — local government or a community group?

At first impression, local government presents an impressive range of managerial and administrative resources. After all, they have been managing rates, drains and the dog pound for many years. But drains, sewerage plants and roads are pragmatic and non-threatening when compared to the social issues of single parents, child abuse, unemployment, little money and families working for an identifiable place in their society.

We don't suggest that local government does not have a role to play in community development. Ideally it is a role based on communication and sharing of resources. But where a community knows that local government is indifferent to their needs and concerns, then they become bemused and cynical about the capacity of local government to play a sympathetic role in their daily lives.

What happens when a community ceases to be fragmented, becomes cohesive, organised, develops positive networks, knows how to play the submission game, identifies more and more services and asks for more and more money? In our case we've become 'bloody' Bridgewater and Gagebrook asking for more money. This issue represents a further anomaly in the policy of localisation.

Policy makers and politicians need to realise that they cannot control the outcome of their making funds available for community based services. Money isn't just poured into a vacuum. A process of dynamics is involved. There can be, as Frank Maas has commented, 'unexpected outcomes'. If the outcome is undesirable due to a community group becoming articulate or politically critical, is the backlash to be reduced funding, unheeded submissions or no money at all?

Localism can be viewed as a double-edged sword. If a community group is perceived as disorganised, with no identifiable infrastructure, funds are not made available to enable services to commence. If the outcome is politically undesirable due to a community group develop-

ing skills, becoming articulate and potentially critical, then services still stand to be disrupted or discontinued due to a non-commitment to further funding. At a community level does this mean we have to make a decision to shut up or stand up?

Consider the theory and anomaly of volunteerism. Traditionally the burden of volunteerism falls upon women, both within the context of family and community. In simplistic terms, volunteerism at a community level is a policy that works along the lines of 'if a community group wants this or that service, they will have to supplement inadequate grants with voluntary donations of time'. This policy is inequitable and means that economically disadvantaged communities pay again for being poor. If you want it, then do it — for *nothing*.

From our perspective we suggest that the right to work for remuneration is the stage before volunteerism. For some individuals the chance to work within a paid, community based service provides the first opportunity to develop work-related skills — skills that regularly employed people take for granted: to use a telephone, to write a letter, to handle money, to be part of meetings, to take responsibility, to present a point of view.

An obvious anomaly within volunteerism is accountability. Government departments place conditions of grant upon public monies allocated for community based services. Evidence is required that committees or collective infrastructures exist to assume that accountability.

If the service is provided through voluntary labour, who assumes the accountability? Who has had the experience to assume it, and, more importantly, why should anyone assume it?

Or is it that communities aren't expected to assume that sort of accountability? Are local government or government departments to do it for them? If this is the intention, where does this leave the policy of localism?

Is the purpose of volunteerism to reduce expenditure in the area of community welfare? Is the purpose to free government employed welfare officers from the time-consuming routine of administering emergency relief, enabling more time to work in the community? Is the intention to discourage those people who choose to work at a community level through offering low pay or no pay at all? Who is to assume the advocacy role on behalf of a community? Is the outcome a return to a dependency model where communities depend on departmental officers for expertise?

In the past months all of us at the Bridgewater House have experienced our impotence and our potential strength. We have gained insights into power and the potential for use and abuse. We have sat in meetings, discussed strategy, who to see, who to write to, who to lobby, what to say. We have learned who supports us and who does not, which politician to approach because he or she is good value and who to leave out. In short, we have acknowledged our potential to create an informed power base within our own community.

Policy makers can react either by encouraging this development of

confidence and cohesiveness and contributing towards an environment of mutual respect. Or they can feel threatened, adopt defensive stances, become inflexible or reduce the funding.

We suggest that our experiences are no better or no worse than those of many community based groups. The experiences are validated because they belong uniquely in the context of our community. We hope that the sharing of our perspectives in some way gives insight into the nature of your own experiences in the context of your own particular time and place.

ADELAIDE

Friday 15 July 1983

Program

Chair David Keane
Acting Director
Institute of Family Studies

Opening The Hon. Greg Crafter MP
Minister for Community Welfare

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families
Frank Maas
Institute of Family Studies

Family support services
Jim Alexander
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Children's services
Deborah Brennan
Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Social support and access to services in an Australian community
Peter d'Abbs
Institute of Family Studies

Families' access to and use of support networks — some case studies
Jean McCaughey
Institute of Family Studies

Chair Judith Healy
School of Social Administration
Flinders University

A South Australian perspective
Ian Cox
Director General
Department of Community Welfare Services

A community response
Sheila Hall
Para-Districts Counselling Service
Janet Luxton
SA Association of Subsidised Childcare Centres
Ann Prior
Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services

A panel discussion

Close and summation

Families and welfare services

THE HON. GREG CRAFTER MP*

Thank you very much for inviting me to open this seminar, which will focus on community involvement and delivery of services to families.

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the Institute of Family Studies and to thank representatives of that Institute for their contribution to the organisation of this seminar and indeed to similar seminars that are taking place right across this country. The Institute has done much to highlight the role and the needs of the families in our society, and I am sure we are all very grateful for that. Much has been said about the family in recent years, although I sometimes think the very word 'family' has become used like a brand of washing powder in an assembly-line production unit which is exactly the same as every other unit. However, in opening the seminar I do not wish to sound like an expert on families. I will leave it up to you to debate and deliberate on the many complex and varied issues relating to the provision of services for families. I can, however, make a few points, which I suppose is the hallmark of all politicians.

The first is that I couldn't do my work as Minister of the Crown, indeed as a Member of Parliament without the enormous support of my own immediate family, my extended family, my friends and neighbours. The other points are perhaps best highlighted in the Institute's excellent first report to respondents of the survey conducted in Geelong, Victoria. Most families in trying to overcome their problems find the extended family is a great source of help, as are friends and neighbours. However, professional help is recognised as necessary in so many situations. Groups that most need services, for example low-

income earners, migrants and the aged, are those who use services the least. They see services as either too formal or too remote to offer personal support in far too many instances. I think there is no doubt that in providing welfare services we are still a long way off from working with the family in its own environment.

In South Australia we have come a long way, I would suggest, towards recognising that. In fact, as far back as 1970 we were establishing strategies and policies which are relevant today. For example, we proposed establishing community welfare centres to replace or develop the then district office concept and that those welfare centres would act as information referral centres, provide a venue for active community service, act as a catalyst in community welfare development and carry out the welfare provision required by the Act of Parliament that orders the work of our Department. Since then the provision of welfare services has become even more close to home as welfare workers throughout the State and the government and non-government sectors have assisted in establishing or supporting neighbourhood houses, community networks, drop-in centres and street work projects to name a few.

The aim fundamentally is to provide welfare services not in isolation but alongside or even within the family and social structures of the community. I might cite as an example the work of the crisis care section of the Department for Community Welfare. The tragedy is that their intervention, their role with families in the family situation at home is often an intervention that occurs too late, where not only are human relations broken down but physical destruction is taking place as well.

On the other hand, the role of computers must obviously play a great part in the furtherance of welfare services in the community itself, and we are actively exploring that within our Department and we see that as a very important addition to this thrust in the delivery of welfare services. But of course we have a long way to go, particularly for those groups most in need. You would be aware that the main inquiries in this State come from migrants, the aged, those on low incomes and others. Most in need are the greatest under-users of our welfare services. Judging by the Geelong study, it appears that may be the situation in other States as well. Welfare services in some cases are not reaching the people who need them most. That may not be because of any lack of effort or skill from the various welfare agencies I hasten to add. In some cases it may be that people prefer to seek support through their own family or neighbourhood networks whereas they may feel that to seek help from a professional agency is to admit defeat, be humiliated, or that they will be in debt to that agency or, I suppose, to society itself. Equally they may be unaware of services available because they suffer a disability such as illiteracy or are housebound or are isolated.

Whatever the cause, the fact is that there are families and individuals in our communities who are not receiving some of the support services the professional agencies have to offer. I sincerely hope that in your discussions today you will address this issue and perhaps arrive at new ways to provide services to families in need. As I have said, I don't have

the answers, but I suspect that whatever the answers are, they will revolve around these two points. Firstly, that services being built into a natural environment will be more acceptable to the family receiving that service, and secondly, the community, and specifically the family, friends or neighbours, being more involved in providing family support.

Community based services for children and families — a South Australian perspective

IAN COX*

The simplest speech that I can make is to say 'yes' to the question of whether strong support is given to community based services for children and families. What is more important is that there is some unique evidence of support for this in the fact that on 30 June 1970 there were 675 children under guardianship in State institutions and in 1982 there were 108. It can be shown as evidenced in the voluntary sector of children's homes where in 1970 there were approximately 800 children and in 1982 there were 90. It can also be shown that while we have decreased the number of institutions, remarkably we have not increased significantly the number of children in foster care or care which removes them from their natural environment.

The papers presented to this conference give me a mixture of both despair and encouragement. There is no doubt that it is an era for reflecting on how incompetent governments are, and it is a great pity that the idealists in this world quite often attempt to scapegoat the organisations which have to provide some of the direction and drive for changing and developing plans, without in many ways receiving some of the credit for what they have accomplished. In some of the papers presented today there is little encouragement for venturing out and changing the nature of services, for it must always be realised that eventually what is done will be criticised and often cynically.

My excitement is raised, however, by the quality of the Geelong study which speaks in some ways of the basis on which services should be planned. There is startling evidence in that study of the family desire for independence and yet the occasional cry of desperate need. There is also

* Director-General, Department of Community Welfare, South Australia

evidence that unless we change our ways of operating, the middle class get the services because of their skill in accessing them and those in desperate need miss out. I am sure that the quality of welfare services should be measured in relation to their accomplishment of services for the most needy in our community. I am sure we have a long way to go in every State to meet this ideal.

Paraphernalia of process

The debate on how to achieve better and more suitable services without affecting the social norms of the community and without writing a paternalistic idea of what is better for people is associated with many of the practices of developing government to achieve better services. It would be unrealistic to say that the lobby groups and the case examples which come into the press do not affect the way in which our social services respond. The quiet study conducted in Geelong by the Institute of Family Studies and the study done by the Mann Committee in South Australia do not give the same public exposure of directions. These studies need a wide exposure as they reflect an idea of what people see as most necessary and how they would like it provided. The processes and practices of developing community services which ignore some of the established agencies and mediating structures do not gain a great deal of support from the Geelong study.

As an administrator who lived through the AAP, you can understand why I talk about the paraphernalia of process. The amount of time spent by skilled, sensitive welfare people in developing institutions was alarming and unnecessary. I certainly support self-help groups, and I certainly believe there should be some ways of assisting them to a realistic incorporated existence. In fact, I think some of the most significant helping services developed for people in real need have been services that have been of a self-help nature. A very important task, however, is to ensure that the paraphernalia of process does not destroy the idealism of the service.

Caring is costly

There are people who suggest that the move to localisation of services and community services has started because of the cost-cutting process that is now the concern of all governments. This is rubbish! In the 1970s in South Australia, the process started in a reasonably affluent time of government and with a government which was supporting the widespread development of services. There was a commitment to non-institutionalising services and a real belief that by working locally we would reflect the differential needs and respond in a far more suitable way to the many needs of local communities.

The Minister mentioned the plan which has nearly been achieved in establishing community welfare centres, and that plan was never seen as a cost-cutting exercise, but the most essential and best way to give people service. Those who would now wish to suggest that community services are less costly might need to rethink. Certainly you don't institutionalise the services as far as possible, but you must ensure that there are access points at which the really needy in our community can gain entry to services. The cost of caring in both human and money terms is great.

In the child protection area of welfare services, there is a debate between the professionalisation of services and the localisation of services. I am certain that unless the systems of support to families and mothers (who are most reflected in our statistics on child protection matters) are based on a local neighbourhood and mediating structure, there is no hope to really help those children and their families. Professionals cannot work any more hours, cannot be aware of the trauma of the moments of darkness in the house or many of the other things which involve the family and the children.

There are very many sophisticated systems of prevention of child abuse throughout the world, and many of them are professionally overweight. It would be wise for us not to consider this as a cost-cutting exercise, but that the best way available is to alert neighbours and friends to some of the dangers which most of us do not really believe exist because of our normality. This approach works in South Australia and needs further development.

There is no government that can afford a viable system of total government care as the needs of modern communities are many and varied, not time-limited or time-located. The debate, therefore, about whether localisation is a cost-cutting exercise reflects a naive attitude and not a real appreciation of the size and magnitude of people's needs.

Into the 1980s

Instead of finding blame, of querying certain strategies as being paternalistic or permissive, there is a far greater need for us to ensure that some of those do not dominate the way we provide services. We should get on to greater philosophical decisions in encouraging services to be provided in the most effective way.

My Department is working at a corporate plan which certainly will need a great deal of further development before it becomes a reality. It is premised on the fact that the greatest assistance that can be given to families in need, or to disadvantaged people, outside income maintenance, are services which use the naturalness of the living situation they are in and the society which surrounds them. In other words, we do not believe that people become related to the normality of life by structures and processes which are extremely abnormal. This will have a lot to say

about the way in which we view institutions, women's shelters, children's shelters and children's institutions.

It also has a lot to say through many other social institutions not necessarily related to the welfare fields, such as schools, pre-schools and hospitals. The concept of naturalness is not a cop-out, but places new demands on welfare staff to look carefully at what initiatives can unhook the helping capacity of the community so that families are not left alone.

While the Geelong Study shows that people prefer to use their families and friends to support one another, it is pretty telling when you appreciate that nine per cent of the respondents said they had at least one friend, 40 per cent said they had several friends and seven per cent said they had no friends. The friendship of neighbours only amounted to 28 per cent. I am sure that says something about our work with elderly people — friends at workplace 20 per cent and old school friends 12 per cent. The situation of support in localities needs a new emphasis by people such as employees of welfare departments.

The second premise is that life interference should be minimal. It is interesting that in all the debates of the papers that have been presented, quite a great deal of the literature talks about allowing people to establish their relationships, whether they be familial or just companionable in their way. It is difficult to develop systems to meet needs in income security along this process and some are sure of missing out because of the lack of definition. However, it is essential in the development of welfare processes that what is a security situation for any person does not get disturbed because of the intervention of a welfare system or a helping system that needs to tackle one or two issues and the social needs of that person.

In the past there has been a great disease among welfare people to consider placement as one of the answers — placement out of the situation in which you find a person. We used this for delinquents, neglected children and aged people, and it really did not answer the problem. Placement is a process that should be used with great sensitivity as it creates a somewhat easier answer than definite work within the local community support networks.

The third thing I would like to air from a South Australian perspective is what we have learned from the bushfires. In developing a corporate direction, the Executive of the Department has talked about the development of local, accessible persons who in actual fact integrate the services that they need and provide the sort of Ombudsman/advocacy support help for the clients seeking assistance. You can imagine that people who were burnt out were not welfare clients. They had no idea of the support systems of the community and in fact the act of being burnt out did not put them into the category of being welfare clients. What they seemed to need most was a person to respond to them, who knew government systems and could obtain information on private enterprise, could obtain a full knowledge of what they could achieve and receive and be able to interpret this for each individual family. This system worked and we have received many expressions of support for

doing it in this way and very little resistance from the many enterprises of government and private insurance companies which became involved and were approached by the workers. The workers were sensitive enough not to take away the autonomy of fire victims, and yet they knew that intervention could reduce some of the heartache that had been suffered and enable the victims to achieve for themselves.

It is access to services and the opening up of possibilities to services at the time of great need which showed up in the Geelong study, and it is going to be the way Welfare Departments will operate in the future, that is if Welfare Departments have to be necessary as we find less need for statutory interference in people's lives. The centrality of the client, the services integrated around the client's needs in a normal non-life interfering way is the attention we have to give if we are to develop welfare services further for the 80s.

This opens the demand for new local access people such as the black parents used in America, it opens the demand for a new role for mediating, and it opens the demand for youth clubs, youth groups, and churches. It suggests that when an organisation is established, it must be accountable to the community, the clients, and accountable for what it provides in an altogether different sense. The access workers who make the referral or help to get the person to the right source of help will also have something to say about the way services are funded, the quality of service received and how effective it was to achieve goals.

The South Australian perspective is that consumers do have a say and our new amendments to the Act suggest that consumer forums may be a start to a new level of sensitivity reflected in a needs-based service at a local level with resources, both financial and expertise, coming from the total caring community.

A view of community based services

SHEILA HALL*

Before I start, I would like to say that if I sound a little bit negative, it is perhaps because in working where I do I have had to become extremely realistic in order not to be cynical. I am an indigene of the area in which I work and in case some of you are wondering about that term, in literature which usually comes from America it means a black Negro working in the local ghetto or a Puerto Rican assisting her or his local people. An indigene is supposed to have a sensitivity to, an understanding of, and a rapport with the community in which he or she works. As an indigene in Elizabeth I wish to make it quite clear that my remarks are not purely related to the Elizabeth-Salisbury area where I work, in a sort of schizophrenic way; half and half between health and welfare and the situation becomes even more schizophrenic when you look at the fact that I am very much motivated towards preventative measures. In fact, in our agencies we are coping with the daily crises that come along just as they do in other agencies in Geelong and elsewhere. We are too busy to be starting to do anything preventative. We are also, and have been for a fair amount of time, almost too busy coping with our own financial crisis to do anything but keep the doors open for people, so innovative programs for us are a pipe-dream. Now we are also involved in the issue of submissions, and submissions funding arrangements are very real to us. So we are anything but unencumbered in the agency in which I work.

There are many points in the papers that I have read and many points that were not necessarily in the papers that have been raised this morning with which I agree very much. But I want to make a few points

which I think could carry the debate or the argument just a little bit further.

Agency statistics do in fact show that most of our referrals come from the informal sector for support for people, that most of our people are referred to by friends and relatives. The next source of referral are government agencies and that says something about accessibility. I will mention that later, as I will mention the matter of support for welfare workers and advice to welfare workers.

The first main point I want to make is that sufficient flexibility of criteria must be built in to fund appropriate programs to suit the needs of differing parts of the community. This is essential and it must be built in at a central level. I think the child care people are involved with this. There must be flexibility to see to it that the community is defined in as many different ways as possible and that funding suits the differing ways in which the community is organised. It is not always simply a geographical area nor is it the ideal social state.

Secondly, control is not merely the problem of the centralised service or funding bodies. People who are in a local area may have a great deal of control over their fellow community members. There are in fact people who are thrown up as leaders in communities and there may be limited numbers of those in the small populations in which we live in Australia. Many of these leaders mix with each other in many different fields and on many different committees. In fact the incestuousness of the situation is no joke. This very incestuous situation can lead to manipulation and to pressure being put on to people to make decisions on a reactive rather than an objective and long-term basis.

Thirdly, proper mechanism for evaluation and accountability should be provided at a level where real local needs and effectiveness of programs can be assessed and broader perspectives provided to these community providers themselves. Here I want to give an example of what I see as a model. Our agency was involved in a family support program and during that time the Department of Community Welfare Services, which was administering the funds, sought to appoint a project officer. The person's name was Gloria Hannan and we came to know her as a most effective person. She was in fact a facilitator as well as an evaluator and the way in which she oversaw the program in our agency in particular gave some indication of what could be happening if skilled people were appointed who had the time not only to be facilitating and evaluating (and not in a Big Brother way), but in a way in which they saw the broader perspective; giving advice to those smaller agencies and people who were struggling to see to it that they were spending the money that they got from the government in an accountable way. I would recommend her work to you and would be prepared to talk about that more.

Fourth, recognition be given to the need for trained leaders or catalysts to work within communities and these are what we would call community development officers. Now some reference has been made to local governments. I am very committed to the argument that local

government should become more involved in connection with health and welfare services, but unfortunately the contribution in these areas is patchy. In some cases it is very very good and in others lip service is paid to the needs of the community and very little help is given to the excellent paid administrative and community development staff.

Fifth, accessibility is not simply a matter of local availability. The gulf between the informal and formal assistance for people has already been mentioned. This can be either widened or diminished by the credibility or the reputation of the services. I want to make the point to you that those consumers out there we are discussing at a distance today are not naive. We might think they are, but they have a wonderful network of information when it comes to a stinking service or a very good one. People have their own perceptions and they are entitled to those. No matter how well you may think you are doing, it is the sort of feedback that you get with your ear to the ground that can often count.

Local services, good as they may seem to be, also constitute a great problem for consumers in terms of confidentiality. Our experience is that we have in fact in the early days of the service had people who have said that I am not going there because Mrs Blabbermouth works there. That is something that has to be guarded against very carefully. Confidentiality is one of the main cornerstones of any community based service, and then there is the speciality that the service offers. If you are offering a local service by birthline, you might well find that people will not come to it because they cannot be anonymous enough, and they really are so sensitive about their particular type of needs that they would rather go to the other end of Adelaide. In our counselling service, we do in fact find professionals coming from the other end of Adelaide to us because of the mere fact of confidentiality. On the other hand, since we have had a representative from the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Centre in our agency, that person has been fully committed for all the time she has been there, but when we have tried to refer people to any other clinic elsewhere in Adelaide they just don't turn up. So you have got to be really careful in assessing where the people will or will not use the local agencies.

The next thing about accessibility is sufficient resource and funding to make sure that the services are known to the people who are coming into the area. It is not good enough to assume that they do, and, as Mr Cox has stated, people suddenly find they have a crisis where they might never have needed to use a welfare service before and have never developed the knowledge of the welfare network.

We should also be aware that many families may not be looking for greater fulfilment or enhancement and may well want to be left alone to cope in traditional ways, and perhaps this could be at the expense of the peace of mind of the policymakers or local 'do-gooders'.

I should also say something in relation to the submission system of funding, where there is another danger. It is not always simply met with a 'no' if you put in a very good submission, but there is a very big danger in the 'yes' which is qualified in terms of a pilot project. In this case a

certain amount of seed money is put in and then it is hoped that the local community will pick up the tab later on. I see that as even more dangerous than a 'no', because this means that the workers in the agencies or the board of governors, or whoever has set it up, are left holding the baby with heightened community expectations and with the people coming in and needing the services. So beware, 'no' isn't always the worst thing that can happen to you.

I wish to turn next to care for care-givers. Because of our neutrality and perceived confidentiality, we in our agency provide a lot of consultancy for social workers and professionals like doctors and lawyers in other agencies and other spheres. I doubt very much whether we would be funded if we pushed that as an important role. Nobody is talking about the fact that care-givers' marriages break down, that they have emotional problems, that they have problems with insecurity just the same as other members of the community. Who cares for the care-givers? Burn-out is happening daily both in statutory agencies and in voluntary agencies; in that, we are pretty well neck and neck. Is family support sometimes given at a distant level by helping the people who are caring?

Another matter is a cohesive system of care with coordination. That is all very well, but this problem has already been addressed by Mr Cox. Really you can set up as many computers as you like for access to information, you can do what you like in providing mechanisms for people to know what is going on, but it is at the informal local level that care-givers get together and share what they have got to give, so that they know the face at the other end of the telephone. It still depends on human beings. Adequate finance alone is not sufficient for families who are struggling. We freely admit that there is not sufficient attention being given by the Federal government to income maintenance, but on the other hand, the mismanagement of the finance that is available, we find, is something that is chronic in our society and is another matter which has to be addressed.

The need for a national approach to the development of children's services

JANET LUXTON*

I'd like to focus my reply on the urgent need for a national approach to the development of children's services. The main focus will be on subsidised child care centres, but I will not ignore the needs of other services such as family day care, out-of-school care, occasional care services and creche services.

If I repeat what Deborah Brennan says, it is because I believe her paper makes sense. All people who care for children are involved in child care. Whether it be parents, grandparents and schools or in child care centres, subsidised child care centres play a very important part in the provision of quality care for children within their community. However, they should not be the only form of care available outside the family. Family day care, pre-schools, creche services, occasional care and emergency care services all work towards providing a broad range of services required by children aged 0-15 years. It's pointless developing community services for families if there is no provision for caring for children while parents partake in programs or activities, catering for their own needs. Child care services must be developed as an integral part of any community service. I envisage communities where young children, young adults, adults and older adults have access to each other's company while maintaining a unit which caters specifically for their own individual needs. Child care centres also act as valuable resource centres where families are offered support and advice on a wide range of problems facing parents and families. Taking care of parents' needs is an integral part of taking care of children. Perhaps here I should clarify my meaning of the term 'community'. 'Community' refers to any group of

people with a common bond, whether that is a neighbourhood based on work, or a migrant group, or an Aboriginal group.

At the recent child care conference, it was very obvious that two of the biggest problems facing children's services at present are the lack of services operating and the lack of future plans for children's services, and the lack of funding available to them.

First the lack of operating services. The use of the submission model to establish children's services has proved to be inadequate. It relies on community groups to make submissions on the assumption that all communities have equal know-how. The result has been that areas of highest need have often missed out. This approach does not realistically meet the needs of all children in this State and is subject to governmental whims and political consideration.

Secondly, the Child Care Act 1972 is the only piece of legislation under which children's services can be funded. It seems today's child care centres are the only service it covers. This leaves family day care, out-of-school-hours care and other services to be funded at the discretion of the government of the day. The Child Care Act does not fund child care centres at a level which reflects the needs of children under five. This leads me to propose some solutions.

The present government states that access to community child care is a right. There is urgent need for more subsidised child care centres, with most operating centres having long waiting lists. To ensure that all children have access to this right, a national planning body is urgently required to develop a long-term forward plan for a children's services program. The planning body is necessary because at present services are fragmented and responsible to different government departments. That is, day care comes under the Department of Social Security, family day care under Community Welfare, and pre-schools under Education Departments. Some centres have received funding from three different departments. The Federal government must assume major responsibility for provision of equitable services to all States and the Federal government is the only body that can ensure the availability of resources to provide children's services. Broad goals, planning principles and specific service objectives on a national level are required so State and local governments can plan and implement their own commitments to children's services. For this body to be effective, a commitment to a more rational development of the range of services is essential. State and local governments must be consulted, and it is essential that community groups feed into this process.

I see state governments having responsibility in providing a state planning body which will ensure the equitable distribution of Federal funds. This body will also have a major coordinating and planning function as well as an advisory capacity responsible for dissemination of information. Through the development of children's services development officers, local governments would become involved with responsibility for provision of services required by the community they serve.

There need to be drastic changes in the level of funding provided by

the Federal government to children's services. An amended 1972 Child Care Act or a new Children's Services Act is essential to fund a much broader, much wider range of services. This will also ensure that services have a solid statutory base and avoid the situation where services are competing for funding. The Act needs to reflect realistically the costs involved in developing and maintaining quality children's services.

At present, one of the major problems facing subsidised child care centres is staffing. The funding provided for staff is grossly inadequate and does not reflect the fact that child care is a labour-intensive industry. Staff child ratios need to recognise children's basic needs, not the present situation of one teacher to 15 over-three year olds and one nurse to 10 under-three year olds. Coordinators of programs and directors of centres are not recognised as people needing funding. These people are absolutely necessary to run any child care centre. There is no provision for the funding of relief staff and ancillary staff are also not funded. These are only a few areas in which subsidised child care centres staffing levels are not adequately catered for. Family day-care workers are not even paid award rates wages. Occasional care and creche services depend largely upon voluntary labour. We must move away from the idea of relying on cheap labour in children's services. Caring for children is a highly skilled occupation and funding levels must reflect this. Grants payable to service providers also need to reflect the ongoing cost involved in providing quality child care. To date there has been no provision for renewal of equipment, maintenance or housekeeping costs such as phone or electricity. Subsidy payments are available to families considered to be in economic need. These are people who are seen as not being able to meet the full cost of care, however many people, not categorised as being in need, attain monthly child care fees equal to fees charged for a term at a private school.

I have focused on the need for realistic planning and funding of children's services on a Federal level as I believe that, without such action, children's services will not receive the recognition they deserve. At the child care conference, it was stressed time and time again that a national children's services planning body was essential. South Australia can only benefit from such a body. Since the dismantling of the Childhood Services Council, the development of services has been fragmented and inadequate. The State government is at present re-assessing its priorities and directions. We need to develop a cooperative approach to the development of children's services in South Australia, and I believe this can be done.

A personal view of child care

ANN PRIOR*

Well to come at the end of this day of speakers is, you must agree, a daunting task and in considering what I would say I decided that everything else would have been said and therefore I have taken a fairly personal view of the subject. I think the Institute of Family Studies is to be commended for arranging these seminars which address some of the most difficult issues facing government in the community.

The papers we have heard have all spoken of the need for services, and of difficulties which have occurred in providing them. The need for services seems to be fairly well established. We have certainly been made aware of the very profound influence of government policy on families and of the problems present government policies have created for both service providers and service recipients. It would have been illuminating, I think, to see a paper on exactly what system of welfare, housing and health provisions would provide an environment which enhanced family functioning. It is easy enough to knock the system but less easy to say what to put in its place. Families with children will almost all need some community support with child-rearing at some stage. I believe that services are needed not only by the poor and the troubled but also by the majority of the so-called normal families as well. In tackling the provision of services, we have a very delicate balancing act to do. A balance must be struck between the informal networks of family and community support and the more formal social services provided by State and Commonwealth authorities; between prevention and cure; between the needs of adults and the needs of children; between the physical and emotional needs of children and parents.

* Senior Social Worker, Marriage Counselling Services, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Child, Adolescent and Family Health Services, South Australia

Deborah Brennan in her paper tells us that child care services are among the most effective support services that governments can provide for families. I entirely agree with her. Much of her paper emphasises the need for greater provision of services, including various forms of day care. There seems to be a current emphasis on and pressure for more day care, for which there are a number of complex reasons, which I don't propose to go into now. You are all well enough aware of them.

However, a significant source of pressure in recent times for more day care has come from the women's movement and its supporters. Demands centre on a woman's right to develop and use all of her capacities not just those of homemaker, and on society's obligations to organise social services to make it possible for a woman to do so. These demands are of course valid. But danger lies, I think, in not recognising the special importance of the mother to her child. Many mothers believe, often correctly, that with stimulation from other activities and part-time relief from child care, they function better as mothers.

The more militant voices on the subject of the need for day care, however, often express no awareness that the kind of care and experience children have in the early years influences the kind of adults they become. Broad statements about parental rights to day care do not come to terms with the issue of who is to care for children of parents fulfilling other potentials. The answer implied by feminists to deal with this vital issue is that child care can be turned over to almost anyone who agrees to do it. This is dangerous thinking of the kind which led to many children being placed in residential institutions 20 years ago. Economic means is an unfortunate source of pressure on families to turn a large part of their parenting role over to others, and yet it is happening all around us. If good substitute care can be found, some of the disadvantages of diminished parental influences on the child may be offset; but since much of what is offered by day care providers is still not of high quality, and Janet's paper has just borne that out, its use often reflects a compromise between parental standards of child rearing and economic pressures.

Such a compromise should not be required as there are a large number of people who want to have children. I question whether more and more day care facilities are the answer to a social need of our times, or whether the increasing demand is not mainly symptomatic of an economic problem. However one answers that question, there will always be some need for day care. Some parents would use it whether it is economically needed or not, and for some children reasonably good day care can provide better experiences than would be available to them at home. Whether day care is used for necessity, which may deprive parents of a role they prefer not to deal with, or use it for individual preference, inferior day care will mean severe disadvantages for the children involved. Inferior day care is a matter for community concern and will probably cause as many problems as it attempts to solve. If government policies force parents to replace their parenting with alternate forms of child care, it seems to me that governments have a responsibility to ensure that high quality substitute care is provided at a cost which can be

afforded and in a manner which makes it accessible.

I want to take up what to me is the most important point made in Deborah Brennan's paper, although she mentioned it only in passing. Namely, that care by parents is itself a form of child care. I would suggest that it is the major and most important form of child care and one which is deserving of recognition and support from the community. It is one that we largely take for granted, in my opinion. In this regard, in planning services a fundamental question needs to be asked and is not often asked. What qualities of the environment and social settings promote healthy and mutually satisfying parent/child relationships? Detailed consideration is beyond my scope here, but I would suggest that certain conditions are absolutely basic. Firstly, adequate financial support. Secondly, the availability of companionship and support for the mother who is generally the main care giver, but for the father, if he is the main care giver. Thirdly, the availability of children or young people to assist the mother and play with her young children. It seems to me that the natural setting for mother and baby includes access to other adults and children, and the paper about the Geelong study bears this out and suggests to us that people do need places where they can get together and make friends, and that this is one of the basic requirements of supporting mothers. Fourthly, contact with the natural world. Fifth, provision for help in the event of misfortune. Finally, attention to architectural and environmental and administrative conditions which may affect sensitive aspects of mothering behaviour. For example, modern blocks of flats with no safe outside areas for play and a lack of playground facilities and park facilities and new housing areas are good examples of how we haven't learned much about those sorts of needs. Affluence may help to improve these variables, but often this is not the case; and I very much doubt whether much more affluence will help us with it.

If we could get the environment more in tune with parenting needs, we might do something significant to help families. It is my firm belief that, on the whole, child rearing is best done by parents. To this end, social structures and policies should facilitate care of children by their parents. I am beginning to wonder if that is a very old-fashioned view. Economic circumstances should not deprive a parent of the choice of being a full-time parent. Also society must value the care-giving role of women or men, if they are in the main care-giving role, simultaneously with women's access to more public roles. In this regard, the payment of the child endowment to women is one of the most powerful and positive steps ever taken by government, in my opinion, in the support of Australian mothers in general; and it is still, however meagre, a symbol that motherhood has the need for and the right to government financial support. It is still a source of great help to many Australian mothers.

The art of parenting does not come naturally to everyone. It requires the development of specific skills, a knowledge and appreciation of the developmental needs of children in their various stages of growth which can give parents much needed help. Realistic expectations of the child's behaviour follows and the setting of limits is within reason.

This brings me to another aspect about the care of parents which is of particular concern to me and which is rarely talked about, except by me, I suspect. I speak about the very punitive attitudes towards child rearing which are prevalent in our community at all social levels. Many 'good' and normal Australian parents seem to have the attitude, often from birth, that the child is basically selfish, demanding, wanting as much as he or she can get, manipulative, cunning and, overall, in terrible danger of being spoilt. I'm told this by parents when the child is seven days to 14 days old. These parents try desperately to control and direct their child and seem to believe that children can be held in line only by parental pressure, threats and physical punishment. Not much importance is attached to enjoying a good relationship with the child, and the attitude seems to be that all learning must be forced down the child's neck. The attitudes of these parents seem to increase conflict, frustrations and stress and unhappy relationships and seem to lead to all sorts of difficulties in child management and to feelings of parental failure. Punitive child rearing attitudes are a poor foundation for happy family relationships and are reflected, I believe, in the unsatisfactory state of our family life. As a community, we profess to be shocked at the levels of spouse abuse and community violence of one sort or another, and yet we pay little attention to the very significant violence which is directed by normal parents towards their normal children all in the name of discipline. The tragedy, as I see it, is that most parents want to, and try to, do the right thing.

As a community, it is about time we acknowledged that many parents need education and help to understand and manage their children. The average family size of one or two children does not allow for exposure to the realities of child care which formerly would have been experienced in larger families. Some parents seem to understand their children instinctively, but there are many good and committed parents who do not. In my opinion, a concentrated and comprehensive campaign is needed at all levels of the community, and I have in mind something along the lines of the program provided by the South Australian Health Promotion Unit. It was called 'Is Your Child Really Naughty?' which gets to the hub of the matter, aimed at increasing the knowledge of children's emotional needs and changing attitudes about child rearing from the punishing to the nurturing. A piece of research on this subject would be most welcome. The future of this nation depends on the quality of its child rearing, whether we like it or not, whether that child rearing is done by parents or by parents in conjunction with substitute care givers. It is my belief that more attention needs to be given to the quality of child rearing, as well as to the quantity.

It is rare for researchers and research centres to report their findings so widely and invite public comment and discussion, so I thank the Institute of Family Studies for providing this forum and hope that the Institute reaps some benefits from this amount of scrutiny. The seminar was also sponsored by FACHOS and the Department of Family Welfare, who must again be thanked for the organisation or efforts that both put in.

PERTH

Friday 16 September 1983

Program

Chair Don Edgar

Director

Institute of Family Studies

Opening The Hon. Keith Wilson MLA

Minister for Youth and Community Services, Housing and

Minister with Special Responsibilities for Aboriginal Affairs

Issues confronting the localisation of services to children and families

Frank Maas

Institute of Family Studies

Western Australia's approach to community based services

Keith A. Maine

Director

Department for Community Welfare

Discussion

Family support services

Jim Alexander

Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Response

Terri Coughlin

Social Work Department

Western Australian Institute of Technology

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Children's services

Deborah Brennan

Social Research and Evaluation Ltd

Response

Carey Drake-Brockman

Fremantle One-Parent Centre

Discussion

Discussion of specific issues relevant to Western Australia

Close

A government review to ensure an integrated approach to the provision of services to families and communities

THE HON. KEITH WILSON MLA*

This government believes that the provision of children's services should not take away the responsibility of the family. Rather it should complement that care through the sensitive provision of services which meet community need and our policies will reflect that concern.

In the present economic climate, families cannot always cope without some additional support. In recent months through the Department for Community Welfare and the public utilities we have introduced the Utilities Consumption Subsidy. This financial support will go some way towards alleviating the financial pressures on families. As a back-up to this scheme, a working party has been formed to look at the whole area of emergency relief and concessions to low-income individuals and families in this State. That working party is now in operation, and I anticipate an initial report from them in a matter of weeks.

On looking at the welfare issue, there are two approaches that can be taken, *crisis oriented* or *preventative*. I do not believe that either approach can work in isolation. With the rapidly escalating breakdown in family networks, increasing unemployment and consequent mobility of a large segment of the population, a two-pronged approach is often required. This approach is the only way in which we can achieve quality of service rather than just quantity. Before we can improve a service it is necessary to be fully aware of the quality of the service that exists.

I am pleased to be able to announce the establishment of a Welfare and Community Services Review. This initiative is a most important component of this government's approach to social welfare matters. Mem-

* Minister for Youth and Community Services, Housing and Minister with Special Responsibilities for Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia

bers of this audience will be aware that a commitment to review welfare provision in Western Australia occupied a central position in my government's election promises.

I have appointed Ms Jan Carter to lead this Review. She will be well known to many in this audience for her recent study reviewing child welfare provision in Australia, a range of specialist work dealing with emotional and child abuse, and other publications addressing substantive issues in relation to services to the aged and disabled. She is also an experienced welfare practitioner, with an extensive professional background both in Perth and in Britain.

The Review will be assisted in its work by an Advisory Board, chaired by Bishop Michael Challen. The membership of this Board has been established with a view to opening debate about welfare service planning and provision into a much broader community context.

In addition, a number of panels convened by welfare specialists will also be established. These will enquire into particular areas of professional interest in welfare practice, including non-government coordination and funding, services provided by government departments, client and consumer perspectives of welfare provision and promotion of welfare services.

The Review will be commissioning a range of special research and papers. Arrangements will be made for some special consultancies and workshops to be conducted as part of the Review's task.

An extensive submission, consultation and hearing process will also be set in train with a view to ensuring that a wide range of community, client, agency and worker opinion is placed before the Review team and Board. The terms of reference are generous and permit an even-handed assessment of directions for welfare in Western Australia across the next decade.

In particular, the Review will have regard to the role and function of a new Department of Youth and Community Services, with a broad mandate for the delivery and support of personal community services.

An essential theme in the Review's task will be to ensure an integrated approach to the provision of services to families and communities.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide this opening address. I hope this seminar will be a reflection of an increased spirit of cooperation with the Institute of Family Studies and in the field of welfare.

Western Australia's approach to community based services

KEITH A. MAINE*

I would like to thank Frank Maas for his most comprehensive paper which both outlines the problems facing families today and demonstrates the positive and negative aspects of the welfare response. I welcome this opportunity to respond to the issues, particularly as they relate to the provision of services by the Department for Community Welfare.

The major changes to family structure and societal issues which have been raised are often the focus for the Department's services. In our rapidly changing society, with more people than ever facing new and stressful situations, there is a constant need for flexible, adaptive policies. Response to need should naturally come as soon as possible, but if it is not to be merely a 'knee-jerk' reaction it needs to be a planned and considered response.

Before intervention at either community or government level I believe two stages must be gone through: firstly, the problem must affect enough people for it to become a *social* issue rather than an individual problem: and/or secondly, enough people must be concerned with the issue for it to become a *public* issue.

If intervention occurs before this stage, it may well be more destructive than the problem itself. Recently there has been a great deal of publicity about runaway teenagers. Making a decision about intervention in this area creates major problems for a welfare department. The South Australian Community Welfare Department has recently faced a great deal of publicity on this vexed issue and the Western Australian

* Director, Department for Community Welfare, Western Australia

Department for Community Welfare has received numerous letters on the same subject. It is a mistake to become involved in such a sensitive area without precise policies, and yet there are major pitfalls in drafting those policies. The law is not clear on the age at which a young person may leave home, and cultural/social circumstances in which children do leave vary so widely that guidelines must of necessity be broad. The situation of a 14 year old running away after being lightly punished for smoking is very different from that same 14 year old running away after being subjected to violent physical or sexual abuse. While one group in the community may see clearly that intervention is necessary, another group may feel it is a gross violation of their citizen's rights for any intervention in the family. I think this example illustrates the constant dilemma of social welfare agencies, particularly governmental ones who have a statutory responsibility to protect young people.

However, there often comes a time when a problem for a number of people becomes a cause for public concern and intervention. When this situation arises we are made aware of it in several ways:

- First of all, government policy directs the overall planning and direction of the department and with the new government there has been both close and fruitful liaison in many areas.
- There is continuing feedback from staff and from the public, both from individuals and the non-government section.
- By research into areas of concern, both within the department and externally.
- Planning staff within the Department for Community Welfare need to be aware of current areas of concern and trends in meeting needs both interstate and overseas.
- Finally, the review which has been announced by the Minister will provide a more formal opportunity for informed feedback on the existing services and will hopefully provide direction for the future.

It is a well known sociological phenomenon that the community often takes the initiative in the welfare field. I am sure each one of you can think of examples where this has happened. This initial response often highlights and uncovers the extent of a problem, enabling a planned and organised intervention to take place.

In Western Australia one of the problems we face is what has been described as the tyranny of distance. This, coupled with sparse population and a lack of the family networks mentioned by Frank Maas, creates special difficulties for the Department for Community Welfare. When a much needed service is set up, usually in the metropolitan area, expectations are raised regarding the right to receive that service throughout the community. However in many country areas the Department may be the only agency, and as such it is expected to perform a multitude of functions. This has led to the development of different models of service to meet city and country needs.

In the metropolitan area there may be other agencies which provide

similar services to the department in meeting some specific needs. An example would be the provision of furniture to needy families. This overlapping is not seen as negative, but allows people choice within their area of need. It does however require negotiation, sometimes formally or more often on an informal level to ensure that overlap does not become duplication and waste.

In country areas the response to need for furniture has been somewhat different. Usually there are few other agencies operating because of the problems of distance and the fact that this may be only a small, albeit important, area of need. The Department's response has varied according to the special needs of each area. I would just like to touch on two such responses. In Moora, officers and homemakers have a small furniture store which operates with the help of a committee drawn from the local community, including church representatives. Geraldton, with its larger population, has an emergency relief group which is working on the provision of furniture as part of its services. We have been able to allocate a small amount of money to provide temporary storage for furniture gathered by this group.

In his paper Frank Maas has talked about what resources families use in what situation. He has said that the Institute's early findings are in support of moves to provide services in the local community. In Western Australia many of the services provided by the Department for Community Welfare have had to be provided at the local level because of those factors already mentioned, of distance and lack of existing services.

Definition

Locality development has been described as 'presupposing that community change may be pursued optimally through broad participation of a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in goal determination and action'. This definition, while acceptable as an ideal, can only be a target for a government agency mainly because of statutory restraints. This ideal is generally a desirable goal, but I feel it is also important to note that if the community determines the goals and actions of a local agency, there may be some groups who are not articulate enough, or are in some way unable to pressure for their needs to be met. It is in meeting the needs of these groups that agencies such as the Department for Community Welfare have an obligation to respond.

On the other hand, there may be some services which the community needs but because of their special nature, or the fact that they provide services in a sensitive area, are best provided by a government agency.

The Sexual Abuse Unit would be an example of such a service. This unit has now been in operation for two years. From the beginning an important decision was made that the Unit should, of necessity rather than choice, concentrate on intra-familial child abuse. It was known to be the area where there was least knowledge, fewest resources and

greatest anxiety. It was also the area with the highest levels of denial and most potential damage for the victim.

Because of the specialised and socially stigmatising nature of the work, it may never be possible to fully localise this unit's services. However, the unit has been working with self-help support groups. A group has been running since 1981 for the young victims of intra-familial sexual abuse. The group is run weekly by two professionals. A strong feature of the group has been the mutual support of the young people aged between eight and 16 years. This support reduces the emotional isolation of its members and enables them to resolve the problems of their victimisation. Plans are now being developed to run groups for pre-adolescents and adolescents separately, because of the numbers and the different problems for each age group.

This is an example of the unit's development of innovative intervention techniques. Another feature of the service is the coordination with other agencies dealing with young victims of sexual abuse.

The Sexual Abuse Unit is presently moving into its second phase of further developing and sharing the expertise developed by the original small staff of a supervisor and two social workers. Recent departmental discussion has established that in the long term most child abuse services would need to be located at the Divisional or Regional level. The Unit provides consultation with Divisional Offices so that a more effective service can be built up using local teams. However, the delicate nature of the work indicates that special training is required to deal with it, thus precluding total localisation.

Given these constraints, a range of services by the Department for Community Welfare fit into the definition of locality based services. I would like to discuss some of these services and demonstrate how well or not each fits. I have taken Frank Maas' outcomes as being elements of a locality based service. These are:

- sensitive to particular needs of the community in which they are located.
- part of an integrated and comprehensive system.
- contributing to the alleviation of social inequality and enhanced opportunities for those with few resources.
- provided without stigmatising or reducing independence.
- planned to give high priority to areas of high need.

The services provided at a local level to the general community can be divided into a number of categories. I would like to focus on just three of those areas. Firstly, *crisis response*, where the survival of the individual or the family unit is at risk. Secondly, *preventative services*, where an improved quality of life for individuals or families is seen as necessary to prevent the potential breakdown and resultant crisis. And thirdly, *financial assistance to the community* — the provision or administration of such monies as are available to enable the community to set up and provide its own supports.

Crisis response

In the area of individual or family at risk, the Crisis Care Unit is the most recent initiative of my Department. Crisis Care commenced operation on 20 June 1983 from its base in West Perth. Eight rostered field officers and 30 volunteers staffed the Unit around the clock. Visits into the community by crisis workers (only) are made in two radio-controlled cars.

Since commencement, the unit has received an average of 100 new crisis calls per week. Of these, 20 per cent concerned marital problems, 16 per cent parent-child difficulties, 13 per cent accommodation problems and another 13 per cent concerned food/emergency transport problems. Six per cent concerned runaway children and six per cent concerned mental disturbance. In 41 per cent of cases, the Unit's primary response was to provide information only. A further 29 per cent received telephone counselling and 12 per cent were visited by the Unit.

While the bulk of the Unit's work has been initially engaged in child and family welfare, a wide range of crisis situations have been attended to. As the Unit's service is more widely recognised, it is expected that this trend will continue.

Crisis workers and volunteers work closely and cooperatively together at base, and a further group of volunteers is presently being trained.

In general there has been positive cooperation between the Unit and divisions of the Department and other community agencies, for example child and adolescent clinics and refuges for both adults and children.

With the Crisis Unit the main factors which demonstrate its community base are in the use of volunteers, the liaison and cooperation with other agencies, and finally in the development of contracts with local people in all areas to reduce the possibility of, for example, a child being uprooted not just from his family but his whole network.

Emergency relief

As anyone dealing with the community at this time is only too well aware, there is a continuing expansion of demand for emergency relief. This Department in 1982-83 gave out \$1 097 039 in direct relief which was a 59 per cent increase on 1981-82. In response to expressed concerns of both field staff and the non-government section, three studies on emergency relief were undertaken in late 1982. The three studies indicate clearly what everyone believed to be true: that many people face intermittent crises when their only regular income is a benefit/pension. The increased need for relief has produced an encouraging cooperation between my Department and the non-government sector.

Following the Emergency Relief Seminar in 1981, there has now been a move towards localisation of emergency relief within the metropolitan area. Officers of the Department for Community Welfare have been closely involved with these activities, often as representatives on committees.

In response to these local developments, the Emergency Relief Branch of the Department has begun re-shaping the delivery of emergency relief.

Applying the concept of localisation to emergency relief, it has been deemed appropriate that the department should work with other welfare agencies to promote and develop within each local community a coordinated and effective emergency relief delivery system to cater best for the particular needs of that community.

There is good reason to believe that within most communities there are welfare-oriented groups and a number of sympathetic individuals, with staff and resources which, if efficiently coordinated, could well prove adequate to meet the present needs of that community.

This, then, would move emergency relief towards a more preventive approach in that the Emergency Assistance Service should be developed as an integral part of a planned departmental activity, aimed at the prevention of family breakdown through financial stress.

Also linked to this increased liaison is the government formation of a working party to review matters relating to the administration of State concessions and emergency financial aid. The working party made up of representatives from government and non-government agencies will shortly be calling for submissions on this subject.

Preventive services

I shall briefly look at three preventive services which are mainly community based.

The Homemaker Service

The Homemaker Service has been in operation for 15 years. In that time it has moved from a teaching role to one of enabling. By focusing on the strengths of individuals it encourages them to build up and rely on their own resources. This approach has been most effective where families lack the networks that Frank Maas has emphasised as being the first line of defence for families facing some degree of stress. In the last year, in response to the perceived need for more information and local services, Homemaker training and operations have been focused on resources. Homemakers at the local level have been finding out what exists in their local community. By developing a local resource index, and in getting to know those services on a personal level, they smooth the way for people under stress. Additionally, many Homemakers have been involved in working with their local communities, setting up new services to fill perceived gaps such as furniture stores, which have already been mentioned, in organising bulk-buying groups, and in encouraging local groups to start services.

Community homemaking

One particular aspect of the Homemaker Service, which some of you may not be familiar with, is the Community Homemaking Program. This program was developed to meet the special needs of Aboriginal communities where traditional welfare methods were not likely to be effective. The idea was developed to enable the Aboriginal groups to meet their own needs, by provision of a subsidy to supplement developmental programs which were either planned or already in process. It was seen as vitally important to enhance and build on existing structures, rather than to introduce a welfare service with the imposition of non-Aboriginal expectations. The community was recognised as being able to identify and define their own areas of need and to plan the means by which they should be met. The provision of a subsidy allows programs to be an integral part of the community's operations, fitting in with the existing structure and making use of the group's own important people. It allows the Aboriginal people to perform their programs by providing them with access to skills and expertise. But most important, it also encourages self-determination. This program is probably the closest fit to the concept of community based programs which we provide.

The result of these programs has been very satisfactory, and consideration is to be given to the expansion of this model in other aspects of the Homemaker Service throughout the State. Some experiments are already underway using this funding model. An example of this is the Fremantle Furniture Cooperative, which was provided with seeding funds by the Department for Community Welfare and is now operating as a fully voluntary community based and community run service.

Youth programs

Young people face particular problems in coping with the rapid change and stress of living today. Their expectations are high, but there are many obstacles to the realisation of these ambitions, not least of which are the social and economic factors alluded to by Frank Maas. Particularly vulnerable are many of the adolescents who become involved in our youth programs. Throughout the State, departmental field officers and group leaders are involved in developing community youth programs. In the last year there have been innovative programs in Carnarvon, and, in liaison with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the YMCA, the establishment of youth worker training programs, located in Mullewa, Carnarvon, Roebourne and Derby. The youth programs fit the model in that they are run in the community, for young people in need, either because of lack of social skills, possibly experiencing family problems, or where the young person has had a conflict with authority. Use is also made of volunteers in the running of programs.

The main emphasis of our youth programs is on personal skills development. These life skills are encouraged through close peer interaction

on camps, where the emphasis is on sharing and providing support for each other. Self-esteem is developed by the searching for and bringing out of latent personal qualities of each young person in the group.

Aligned with the voluntary schemes which we run with young people is the Department's responsibility for the administration of Community Service Orders. This scheme which started in 1978 has rapidly developed acceptance by and a major contribution from the community. Over 100 voluntary organisations are presently active in the scheme, providing employment for and supervision of young people who choose community service as an option from the court.

Most recently in our youth programs an exciting development has been made possible through the job creation schemes. Whiteman Park is a regional park located north-east of Midland around Mussel Pool. The park itself is about six times the size of Kings Park and the Department's role will be to develop one segment of the park complex. It is presently in the early stages of development and will provide many opportunities for young people with whom the Department is involved, to participate in an outdoor park project. It can be seen as a launch pad to develop both personal and practical skills as the young people work on walk trails, on building park furniture and learn about conservation and park management.

To some extent in the previous programs I have touched upon the community development role of the Department for Community Welfare. The principles of community based services are the very cornerstone of this model and provide the guidelines by which community work operates.

For the last decade the Department has recognised the value of community development as a method of intervention. However priority of resources has of necessity been directed to the statutory and crisis needs within the community. With the present Western Australian government's stated commitment to community development, the existing members of my Department with a proven commitment to, and experience of, this area are working to improve and rationalise community development services and share expertise to ensure high quality of that service. I am sure this coordination will lead to new and innovative developments in many areas.

Financial assistance to the community

Any organisation, even a voluntary one, needs finance, particularly in its early stages. The Department, through its Grants-In-Aid and Community Assistance Grants, has been able to assist new projects or services to become established, and to provide finance for essential equipment central to the provision of their services. In the 1982-83 financial year the sum of \$98 000 was distributed to groups throughout the State. The Department is also responsible for the administration of

Federal grants, such as the Family Support Scheme. In 1982-83 a total of \$372 155 in Federal funds was administered by the Department for community welfare. One of the projects for which we are responsible is Scallywags Playschool in Derby. This community organisation provides outreach via child care to caravan park dwellers in the remote North-West. Another localised scheme is ESCARE, offering referral, assessment and support services to Esperance residents and complements the role of the Community Welfare Department in that area. There are a number of similar projects in operation throughout the State which are dependent upon the Family Support Services Scheme funding.

I have mentioned just a few of the services which can be seen as community based and also talked about the need to be flexible, continually adjusting to meet the needs of the community. It is often difficult to make change in existing services because of the tendency to bias towards these services. In recent months, the Department for Community Welfare has made one such move towards a more community based service. Responding to the rationale of the Professor Edwards inquiry into 'Treatment of Juvenile Offenders' there have been major changes within the Department's institutional services. This came at the same time as a marked positive decrease in the number of children being admitted to the Department's residential child care facilities. This trend is consistent with the experiences of the private residential child sector.

The change in the Department's policy is one step towards developing more community based interventions, to redress what some people have seen as an over-resourced institutional care approach. In future the Department's intake will be biased towards a more decentralised normalised community care approach. Family care within the local community will be emphasised and children only removed from their local area as a last resort. This decreases the disruption of other supports and network lines of the child, whether an offender or not, and consequently reduces risk of alienation. For offending children the emphasis will be strongly on home liaison with the development of a range of community based strategies to meet the needs of both the offender and the community. This will include evening and weekend classes, outward bound projects and camp activities. These changes have provided the Department with the opportunity to re-deploy a number of resources both at Division level and in the staffing of the Crisis Unit already discussed. These staff members will assist in an improved, sharpened gatekeeping function, reducing the number of children removed from family contact and brought into the welfare system.

The recent moves do not necessarily result in savings to the Department. Rather, the staff will be channelled into providing more community-oriented, family based services in which the child will be seen as part of his family, recognising that any work with the child requires the retention and further development of strong links with the family system.

In discussion of the issue of localised services, Frank Maas has, in his paper, expressed fears about potentially damaging outcomes that con-

cern us all. Many programs have in the past been set up with good intentions but have led to further problems which were not, and often could not, be foreseen in light of the knowledge of the day. By drawing these particular issues to our attention Frank Maas has enabled us to consider them and hopefully plan to provide services which will avoid most of the pitfalls. The proposed review as has been discussed will also assist us by providing the comprehensive view of services which is so necessary to effective planning. It provides an opportunity for the public to become aware of all the Department's activities and we welcome it for that reason.

At a time when accountability is being emphasised, it is also an opportunity for us to receive feedback on all our services, so that we can work towards a comprehensive and streamlined service aimed at meeting the needs of the community. It seems logical that as the welfare area becomes more complex, planning will be a more important element. As I have already indicated, response to welfare needs can be determined by those articulate enough to make submission. We also have a responsibility to provide a response in other areas of need. I would hope that in the future better coordination, planning and priority setting lead to more effective and viable locally based services. The ultimate goal will be for decentralisation at a local level wherever possible. I anticipate a move towards an increase in contractual arrangements with the non-government sector, which will be a major step to providing that localisation of services, but with accountability built in.

Summary

I have in this paper discussed some of the factors relevant to community based services and made mention of the constraints upon a government department in provision of such service. Wherever possible, I have demonstrated the services which the Department for Community Welfare has, which fit the model and talked about future directions in this area.

Note

¹ COX, F. M., ERLICH, J. L., ROTHMAN, J. and TROPMAN, J. E. (1974), *Community action planning and development — a casebook*, F. E. Peacock Publishing Inc.

The Family Support Services Scheme in Western Australia

TERRI COUGHLIN*

Jim Alexander has raised many important issues in his paper 'Services to Families — With Many a Slip'. They included the pros and cons of increased State intervention in family services; the differences that exist both between and within families, particularly the inequalities between families and the dependence of women and children within families; and the history and development of family services in Australia.

In responding, I will raise issues which have emerged through the pilot phase of the Family Support Services Scheme in Western Australia — some are similar to those Jim has raised — others are additional points which have come to light through our experience in Western Australia. Finally, some comments will be made about where we go from here in supporting families.

About the Family Support Services Scheme

The Family Support Services Scheme, a program of services to families, funded by the Commonwealth government through the Office of Child Care, and administered by the Department for Community Welfare, started in Western Australia in November 1978. Originally scheduled to operate for a 'pilot' period of three years, the Scheme has been extended for an additional three-year period, ending in 1984. Jim Alexander has outlined the goals of the program and the types of services which were

* Senior Tutor in Social Work, Social Work Department, Western Australian Institute of Technology

included in the Guidelines, and has noted the contradictory nature of some of the goals of the Scheme.

One hundred and one applications were received from community groups, local government authorities and voluntary agencies in Western Australia who wanted to provide some form of service — a very large number given the size of our population. After selection it was decided that the \$1.2 million which had been given to the State for the three-year period would be divided among 24 applicants. All groups accepted the funds, although one project closed after a short time due to lack of demand for its service, leaving 23 projects. Each project was unique, but it is possible to cite examples which illustrate the types of services which were funded: the City of Fremantle was funded to provide financial counselling services to local residents; the Shire of West Kimberley was funded for a family centre which provided occasional care for children, discussion, craft and special interest groups for women, an outreach worker who organised youth activities and playgroups in Derby caravan parks; the Town of Narrogin was given some funds to employ emergency housekeepers when families were in need of such services.

Features of Family Support projects

Five projects offered one service only and 19 offered more than one service. Nine of these projects were operated by local government authorities, 10 were provided by voluntary agencies (such as Centre-care), 4 were run by community groups and 1 project was offered by a district office of the Department for Community Welfare.

Twelve projects were located in Perth and the remainder were in country areas of the State. The project located at the greatest distance from Perth was that run by the Shire of Wyndham/East Kimberley at Wyndham, 2 176 air kilometres away.

There was a high degree of community involvement in projects, with the majority using community volunteers in the delivery of service.

Issues arising from implementation of the Scheme

Like New South Wales and unlike Victoria, Western Australia used a submission model of funding, rather than a planned approach to the development of the Scheme, partly due to the fact that time was extremely limited between the announcement of the Scheme and the due date for the start of projects, and partly due to a lack of social indicators which would help identify high-need areas of the State. Few community profiles or social needs surveys were available to assist in planning such a Scheme. There was an awareness of areas where there were gaps in service delivery and an intention that the Scheme could be used to expand the extremely limited involvement of local government in the

provision of family services. While decisions were not made by the government about service types that would be suitable to be imposed on the community, the limitations of the submission model of funding have been expressed in the report *Through a Glass Darkly*:

Many Australian initiatives have been in response to expressed need rather than measured need. To this extent, they have ignored the inarticulate or powerless who have not known how to express their needs effectively. The response has been political rather than equitable.¹

A critical examination of the resulting services would suggest priorities could have been differently assigned. For example, in Derby a project was funded primarily to serve the families of government workers while in the same town there are a large number of Aboriginal people who are living in extreme poverty. Even after the pilot phase of the Family Support Scheme there is need for the development of social indicators and other planning activities in this State so that community based services can be allocated to high need areas.

Funding

The Scheme provides evidence that Frank Maas's concern about the possibility of shifting costs of services onto communities or families is well-founded. Most projects were inadequately funded at the start of the Scheme. Once levels of funding were set they were difficult to change over the three-year period although some administrative foresight did permit small increases to be granted to some projects after their second year of operation. This lack of funds resulted in the exploitation of workers and community volunteers (mostly women) in the Scheme. To illustrate one can compare the cost of a Department for Community Welfare suboffice in Halls Creek, which I understand to be in the vicinity of \$160 000 per year (without initial capital costs taken into account), with a family support project in Derby funded at the level of \$25 247 for their first year of operation.

Positive outcomes

Despite these difficulties, the Family Support services in Western Australia has had a positive impact. A conservative estimate would suggest that 35 000 people used family support services over the three-year pilot period. Consumer feedback about the value of services has been extremely positive, and usage of most services has been high — all indicators of program success. Feedback from those involved in operating services indicates that both staff — many of whom were women who had never been involved in managing or operating a service of any sort before — indicated that they, too had gained from involvement with the Scheme, learning administrative skills, learning how to work together, developing an awareness of social issues and gaining awareness of the needs of families at different stages in the family life cycle.

Many projects did not become integrated into a network of community services, because in many communities there was no existing network of services. However, it was a feature of locally based projects in particular that project personnel became catalysts for the development of such networks. Projects often played a role in activating informal support networks, which had a reciprocal character, unlike formal services. Because nearly all projects were sponsored by local government, voluntary agencies and community groups, they did not carry the stigma of 'the welfare department'. Projects were often the first point of contact for families who required extensive support. Projects were able to ensure that consumers knew what government services they were entitled to and assisted them to access such services. Officers of the Department for Community Welfare, even in very small towns, repeatedly talked of the fact that projects were referring families who had serious problems over a long time, but had never been presented to the Department for help.

Some projects have been so convincing in demonstrating consumer need that their model of operation has been incorporated into government planning. The Civil Rehabilitation Council operated a Visitor's Centre at Fremantle Prison which was so obviously needed that a Visitor's Centre was provided at the new State prison at Canning Vale. The neighbourhood centres which were located in Derby, Kununurra, and Manjimup also demonstrated their effectiveness to such an extent that local government authorities in many country areas were calling administrators of the Scheme, requesting funds to set up similar services in their areas, before the first year of the Scheme was over.

Personal social services

Many of the services in the Scheme in Western Australia focused on providing personal support services, such as home support, financial counselling, emergency housing, emergency housekeeping, and counselling. The same tension existed here that Jim Alexander described between individual service and developmental activities, such as information, education and social action. In Western Australia, perhaps in response to the rising impact on consumers of increasing State government charges and a simultaneous reduction in services, family support staff have become increasingly involved in developmental activities over time. A notable example is that of the Fremantle City Council financial counselling service. Staff from this project a few years ago initiated the SEC Action Group, participated in developing proposals for a rebate system for people on low incomes to buffer the impact of substantially increased utility charges. Those proposals, supported by many other personal service agencies in Perth and aided by State government personnel contributed directly to most families in Western Australia who are in receipt of a pension or benefit being now eligible for \$100 rebates against utility charges. Other project personnel have been involved in lobbying for clarification of the 'de facto ruling' with respect

to Social Security assessment and for a better deal for people in this state in the Commonwealth/State housing agreement negotiations. There are other social action and educational activities being undertaken by projects as well.

Family focus of the Scheme

Most projects, especially those which were locally based with a community orientation, found the focus of the Scheme on families with young children to be restrictive. It appears to be a poor organising principle for services, as people do not have problems or needs only when they happen to be living in a family context. It was generally agreed in this State that this family focus should not inhibit the provision of services to individuals, and services for the aged, youth and couples have been initiated or coordinated by family support projects. In fact, there has been concern expressed that this orientation, in itself, if carried too far could lead to stigmatising consumers who were living in other contexts.

The service types delineated as eligible for funding under the Scheme were also considered to be too limiting. Where projects are community based and a need for a service was expressed, projects have responded to community needs. There is little doubt that the whole nature of the Scheme has altered over time to some degree at least.

Further issues

Observing the implementation of family support projects in a variety of communities in this State, it has become apparent that the very term 'community' may be misleading and tends to obscure the way in which people in localities interact. A term such as 'community based' may lead to the false impression that a community is a unified body of people with common conditions, goals and experiences. What has been observed, however, is that even very small communities are divided by class, sex and race divisions. These divisions can, and in some cases were, reflected in the community based projects in the Family Support Scheme. In some instances, project personnel wanted to exclude (and may have excluded) people who needed services but were from a different race or class. While such services appealed in part because they were informal and flexible in style of service delivery, one wonders whether statutory based services, with the 'more consistent criteria for access to general 'entitlement' that Jim Alexander has mentioned may not be more responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged people in our community. The tendency for projects to reinforce existing divisions (with some exceptions) in communities at least must raise the issue of the need to train staff, develop standards of service and monitor projects to ensure that project impact is not negative on those who need it most.

Both Frank Maas and Jim Alexander have demonstrated how the often expressed view that families should be responsible for meeting all the needs of all family members can lead to blaming families for diffi-

culties that befall them. Again observation of projects, especially those employing inexperienced and untrained staff, would suggest that it is unrealistic to expect that workers, even in community based projects would hold any but the dominant view of the family. This view can and does sometimes affect the way in which services are delivered to families in crisis or families who 'refuse to take responsibility for their children'. Again the need to recognise the difference in ideology that often exists between human service providers and the rest of the community. If we are concerned that family services not be stigmatising or lead to dependence, the need for training support and monitoring of community based services according to explicit standards of service is highlighted.

We must be realistic in our expectations of community based programs and what they can achieve. Increasingly those who provide family services, whether within the Family Support Scheme or otherwise, are aware that personal problems very often are related to public issues. Most would recognise that financial difficulties are related very often to lack of income rather than to poor budgeting skills on the part of individual pension or benefit recipients. I share with Jim Alexander the view that no amount of family services, community based or otherwise, will be an adequate substitute for assistance to families provided through the areas of employment, taxation, housing, health, and education. Family support services in this State have proven to be a useful addition to the service delivery network and have been needed and used by the communities in which they have been located. However, the cause of difficulties faced by many families are not addressed through such a Scheme. The benefits of personal support services and centre-based community outreach programs have been demonstrated in Western Australia. Such services should be in addition to, but not instead of, more fundamental changes outlined above.

Supporting families in the future

If we are really concerned about supporting families who are most disadvantaged by present economic management and inadequate services such as housing, income support, and so forth, and yet recognise the limitations of family services, where does that leave us? How can we help to support families, or rather people? There may still be some ways forward. We can press for major changes in the economic structure of our society toward social goals rather than toward profit. We can keep the pressure on for a guaranteed minimum income for all, and for low cost housing for those who need it. We can keep a watch on changes to government-provided services to people — and support those which will benefit the disadvantaged and oppose those which will make their lives worse. For example, in this State there is consideration being given to setting up a State Appeals Tribunal, which would benefit those on low incomes substantially and which deserves our support. On the other hand, the Minister for Social Security, Senator Grimes, said in

Perth two weeks ago that the Commonwealth government was considering proposals for a social insurance system. Such systems operating in other countries often end up costing the poor more than they do the rich. Such a program needs to be carefully considered to determine its impact on families. We can support the expansion of family support services — but not blindly. For example, we know that centre-based projects with an outreach component are popular, particularly in remote areas. Should we support the extension of such services to families of workers who are involved in mining activities, when we know that such mineral extraction, as it is presently done, involves taking land away from Aborigines and ruins the environment?

We can certainly play a role too in raising awareness in the community of the links between personal problems and public policies to bring a halt to the victim-blaming which those who are disadvantaged are subjected to. There is much we can do and we need not worry; the sense of outrage which we have when we see the inequalities and injustices around us will give us the energy to get on with it.

Note

¹ *Through a glass darkly: evaluation in Australian health and welfare services.*, Vol 1., AGPS, p. 57.

The West Australian position regarding the localisation of children's services

CAREY DRAKE-BROCKMAN*

The aim of this paper is to supplement Deborah Brennan's comments and to provide some local illustrations. It will focus on the Western Australian position regarding the localisation of children's services with particular reference to:

- the effect of Federal government policies and a reorientation towards a planning approach, and
- the effect of local and agency policy on the availability of services.

With the new Federal government's intention to move towards a 'planning model' of service provision, we need to consider issues such as: How will planning priorities be established? Who will participate in the planning process?

At present in Western Australia there is not even the shadow of a structure for the implementation of a satisfactory needs planning approach. There are no mechanisms at the regional level to set priorities, to develop services in accordance with local needs or to coordinate and integrate existing services. Funding criteria are complex, restrictive and the relative roles of the community, and Commonwealth, State and local governments are unclear.

The Office of Child Care and staff of the Early Childhood Services branch of the Department for Community Welfare have been the major personnel involved in developmental work. It is not clear that they are able to give either the necessary time nor priority to this area of their work, nor that they have adequate skills in needs assessment or community development. These functions are quite specialised and will be

* Coordinator, Fremantle One-Parent Centre, Western Australia

critical to a reorientation from the submissions model of funding. Encouraging and stimulating the development of submissions has proved taxing in itself — these difficulties will be compounded when a service is to be established in a high needs area without a community groundswell of support, or the essential capital, material, or people resources.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether the funding and approval powers of the Office of Child Care, or the licensing and supervisory role of Early Childhood Services, is compatible with the developmental role. Clearly they will have a key role in the advisory and support area, but additional specialist workers seem indicated.

The obvious model is Children's Services Development Officers (CSDOs) who positively proliferate in Victoria for example, in comparison to our solitary representative in Belmont. CSDOs are predominantly employed by local authorities in order to resource, plan, develop and coordinate children's services and child care needs within a local area. They promote children's services while encouraging community participation and user control of services. Their role involves:

- community development processes
- research and needs assessment
- information and resource provision; including administrative support to groups involved with or developing children's services, and providing a central contact point for action
- coordination, maintenance and maximisation of existing services
- planning and developing new services — a catalyst role
- local policy development and ensuring a rational planned approach.

The planning model for service development favoured by CSDOs, and those involved with community based children's services in Victoria, uses local government as its basic unit for planning grids, needs rating scales and the development of local plans and policies. They have far more confidence in the role of local authorities than can be supported in Western Australia.

In this State they are basically not *willing* to have an extended role in the children's services area, quite irrespective of their capabilities or suitability. Local government here is wary of commitments which may lead to high expenditure on budget deficits. In 1981/82 the Fremantle City Council — often cited as a model for its above-average involvement in community services — met a total deficit in excess of \$65 000 on its 'Commonwealth funded' children's services. This is not an encouraging precedent to other local government areas.

Apart from their reluctance to be involved, there is also no evidence that local authorities would use CSDOs appropriately. Social workers employed by some local authorities have been quite constrained in terms of community development or social action activities.

For all these reasons CSDOs in Western Australia may need a different structure for their placement within the community. However, it is critical to their role that they develop a localised identity.

Another useful component of a planning system, and one with possibilities for a centralised base for CSDOs would be the funding of a resource and advisory service along the lines of the Community Child Care organisations in New South Wales and Victoria. Such a body could supply support services, resources, skilled personnel, policy and planning principles, a research base and advocacy for the development of services.

It is also possible that the Department for Community Welfare could provide an umbrella for the employment of CSDOs at the local level. There is some complementarity between their role and those of the Substitute Care Officers now being more widely employed by the Department. However, the advantages and disadvantages of such sponsorship need careful weighing, and our State government has also not yet shown itself willing to accept an increased role in children's services.

In recent times one of the major difficulties in the development of services has been the lack of willing sponsors. Funding favour has been shown towards the large organisational sponsors and the Office of Child Care has demonstrated reluctance to fund community groups without a proven record of financial management. In theory this is a reasonable approach, but in practice it has virtually eliminated parent and local community groups.

The history of the establishment of a service by the Roberta Jull Child Association illustrates this point. The Association was initially refused a Neighbourhood Centre, including a Family Day Care Scheme, on the grounds of insubstantial financial backing. Unable to interest an organisational sponsor the Association was only able to attract funding for a Family Day Care Scheme once their committee had been remodelled to include wider representation from community groups such as Apex and Birthright, in addition to their very able individual membership. This was a classic example of community needs and requests having to be moulded to suit funding policy. The whole process, of obtaining a less comprehensive service than they needed, took from June 1979 until February 1983. This sort of time delay is not at all unusual.

Another factor which has mitigated against the sponsorship of services by community groups has been the enormous amount of work and cost incumbent on the organisation with no promise of success and negligible support or help during the process. It is small wonder that only well resourced groups have been able to compete.

What is clear is that Western Australia needs to develop its own unique system for the implementation of a planning approach, and the placement of officers at the local level who can facilitate the development of services. We also need to develop support structures like a Community Child Care organisation, and guarantee 100 per cent funding in order to facilitate the sponsorship of services by community groups.

Moving on to how agency policies determine the availability of services, a number of critical factors can be identified. In a paper delivered

at the ANZAAS Congress this year by Andrew Jones of the Department of Social Work, University of Queensland, the following factors were outlined:

- the type of services provided and their suitability to various potential consumers
- the nature of the information available about the services
- the geographic and psychological accessibility of services
- eligibility criteria and priorities
- the cost of the service; fee scales and income tests.

If we apply these principles to the Western Australian scene, a grim picture emerges.

Availability

Services and service types are neither abundant nor equitably distributed. Even in a comparatively better serviced locality such as Fremantle there is not enough Centre-based care; a chronic need for sessional or permanent part-time care, and a critical shortage of Family Day Care mothers within Fremantle itself, which is being serviced by a scheme operating out of the Shire of Cockburn.

Neighbourhood centres or multi-purpose centres are still a novelty in Western Australia. Twenty-four hour care is non-existent. We have no models of parent-managed or controlled services, so participation remains token — cutting up fruit, canvassing of opinions or invitations to meetings with no decision-making power.

We also cater inadequately for specialised groups such as the handicapped, migrants or Aborigines. Most areas would consider themselves fortunate to have access to one type of children's service; a choice between services is rare.

Suitability

In a no-choice situation it is hard to gauge how suitable services are, even to their consumers. Most services, limited in the categories of child care offered, report frequent requests outside their mandate. Centres catering for 2 to 5 year olds receive requests for care for the under 2 year olds. Long day care centres need provision for permanent part-timers, and occasional care centres see families who require full day care. Many services report in excess of 20 requests per month which they cannot accommodate.

In a recent study in Sydney conducted for the Social Welfare Research Centre by Tania Sweeney and Barbara McNulty, it was shown that a high proportion of consumers of children's services used more than one

child care arrangement during the week. (It was often up to three or more.) This was seen as indicative of the inflexibility of services and their inability to meet the needs of families in one stop. No similar study has been done in Western Australia, but there is no reason to suspect the situation will be any different.

Information

Publicity or active information dissemination about children's services in Western Australia is minimal. It is likely that most of those who receive information about the availability of subsidised services do so via the informal communication network. A significant proportion of our population do not know what family day care is, despite the release of pamphlets on the subject. It is only by word of mouth or by the activities of welfare workers that families discover that children's services can be used as a family support by those other than working parents. It is unlikely that either the Commonwealth government or the services themselves will be in a hurry to rectify this situation as it could increase the demand for services dramatically.

Accessibility

Geographically, services in Perth are sparsely distributed. Access to a vehicle is often a necessity — particularly in order to use family day care. We are light years away from the ideal of a multi-purpose centre in every locality.

Psychological access is bound up with the process of applying for a service, as well as the attitudes of the community and the service providers towards the use of children's services. The concept of child care being a right not a privilege has not been assimilated into the community. It is not yet widely accepted that children's services *complement* family care.

Many service providers themselves have not resolved personal fears or conflicts about maternal deprivation or the idea that 'babies should be with their mothers', and must convey guilt and disapproval to their consumers. We need more tolerance of diverse lifestyle choices, and more confidence that parents do the best for their children within their capabilities.

We also need to explode the myths that children's services are only needed by working parents or families that are 'not coping' and that women only work for pin money. In addition, public recognition of the value of services to the children themselves in terms of education, their social development, and sometimes an alternative source of emotional security, would help to establish some attitudinal balance.

Eligibility and priority

Specific government policies, and sometimes the absence of them, influence the allocation of places within children's services. The Australian government requires that all funded services give priority of access to a list of 'special needs' groups such as children of lone parents or working parents, isolated children, handicapped children, and 'at risk' children. On the other hand, the restricted hours of pre-schools may hinder the attendance of children with working parents.

Principles of universal eligibility and priority of admission are difficult to reconcile, although few dispute the need to give some groups preferential treatment. It should be emphasised here that giving priority to some groups is different from the policy of the previous government which provided child care to the 'very needy' as a 'welfare' service.

On the other hand, with the present number of places within services being so limited, it is impossible to encourage utilisation by special groups and maintain a 'normalised' service without stigma. The issue of fee scales, discussed below, is also important in this context.

Another issue of concern is that, unless clearly defined, priority policies can disguise discretionary practices by service providers on the basis of their ideas about the deserving or undeserving.

Cost

Quality child care is very expensive and the cost of care can be a barrier to many potential consumers. The possibility of a subsidy to low income users is not widely known. With the 1983 requirement that all Commonwealth subsidised services introduce a sliding fee scale, the debate about child care as a public responsibility versus the user-pay principle has been heightened.

We already recognise some measure of community responsibility towards children in that Family Allowances are not means tested, there is 'free' public education including pre-school, and enormous resistance to the idea of the user paying for university education. This is reflected in the fact that within subsidised centres consumers paying full fees are still not actually paying the full cost of the care, as professional staff salaries have been subsidised. Nevertheless the costs are high and can be very problematic for middle income earners just past an income-test cut-off point.

In preparation for the September national consultation on the subject of funding formulae and fee relief for child care, the Western Australian branch of the National Association for Community Based Child Care circulated questionnaires to service providers and users. There was fairly general concurrence that the cost of services should be shared by the government and the user according to their means, but that a reasonable maximum fee would be between \$30 to \$50 per week with

extra relief where multiple children were in care. Few yet dream of universal free child care, and it seems clear that while *anyone* pays fees *all* users should pay something, to secure them in their right to comment on the service.

Thus, the major issue to be resolved in the interim before free care, is how to calculate fee scales in order to maximise accessibility and not exclude any particular groups. The Communicare Family Day Care Scheme utilises a very interesting income test which establishes fees remarkably similar to what people volunteer they can afford to pay, and therefore deserves close consideration.

Conclusion

New structures and mechanisms and strong policy guidelines will be needed in order to facilitate a more equitable and comprehensive network of localised children's services.

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DARWIN

Friday 14 October 1983

Program

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Director

Institute of Family Studies

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Minister for Community Development

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Policies to protect and enhance the contribution of family life to society†

THE HON. IAN TUXWORTH*

Governments nowadays have to carefully think out policies to protect and enhance the contribution of family life to society.

The Northern Territory is one place in which the generally accepted notion of the family, with a male breadwinner and mother at home with dependent children, is not borne out by reality. There is a high participation of women in the workforce and, we have a large Aboriginal and ethnic population with differing customs.

Formulating appropriate policies for families is therefore not easy, and I believe that seminars such as this one are a way to increase knowledge on which to base initiatives.

The Northern Territory government recently demonstrated its commitment to assisting families by announcing in the budget that all registered child care centres would be eligible for a 20 per cent subsidy. More recently, an offer has been made to assist the Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Alice Springs, in recognition of special needs of Aboriginal families.

The Institute of Family Studies has demonstrated its worth in two years of operation, with the research papers it has commissioned and produced. In fact, the Community Development Department has commissioned one of the Institute's staff members to undertake research on domestic violence. This research should increase our knowledge, and help the government to develop policies more easily to deal with this important social issue.

* Minister for Community Development, Northern Territory

† This paper is an edited version of a press release.

The Northern Territory's approach to community based services

BRUCE ALCORN*

The structure of any organisation implies many aspects of its philosophical direction. The structure of statutory welfare in the Northern Territory is no exception.

The Northern Territory government organises its welfare services through a Community Welfare Division located in a Department of Community Development. This is no accident.

The Department was established in July 1978 and deliberately included most of those functions which aim at enhancing the quality of life or the developing of independent social functioning in individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities. Included in the Department's functions are consumer affairs; libraries; arts and culture; essential services for Aboriginal communities; community government in Aboriginal communities; correctional services; local government; and community welfare.

This grouping of functions in the one Department is also deliberate. The potential of such a grouping is obvious for:

- area planning;
- a multi-disciplinary approach to social planning;
- broad strategies of social intervention;
- developmental activities in communities;
- prevention as well as remedy of social problems; and
- special exercises, for example, social impact studies.

The motto 'A Way of Sharing' is also deliberate. It signifies to the NT community that we as a Department are in effect joint venturers in the

social development of the NT and its people, and that the resources provided to us as a Department are to be shared with the NT community.

The devaluation of 'community'

Unfortunately for a Department such as ours the concept of community is rapidly devaluing. The rhetoric of social welfare in recent years is replete with the prefix 'community'. 'Social welfare' has become 'community welfare'. 'Social workers' have become 'community welfare workers' and 'voluntary agencies' are now called 'community based services'. I suspect the overuse of this term is deliberate. The concept of 'community' applied as a prefix to another term is usually meant to be a positive attribute. Basically it sounds 'nicer' than most other terms used to describe the business of social welfare.

For many people, 'community' conjures up a nice warm fuzzy picture of simple rustic life; the local pub; the village green; the squire; the vicar; and the blacksmith. Neighbourliness and virtue abound; while the institutions of society remain rock solid. This folksy concept has thus become almost obligatory as a description of social welfare and is used by governments of all shades, radicals, conservatives, old and young alike.

In a sense, therefore, this seminar on community based services is canvassing a fairly tired issue. There really is no debate about community based services any more. There is support for such concepts as community development, self management and participation in service delivery planning by most policy makers, legislators and political parties in Australia.

What is obscured in all this nostalgia for community, however, is the need to make discriminatory decisions about who should do what in social welfare and what factors should be taken into account in this decision making. Basically the slogans, doctrines and ideologies about 'community' will only take us so far, and Departments such as ours have had to develop a far more pragmatic approach to community based services if we are to survive the challenges and the pressures of the eighties.

This paper will therefore attempt to outline some of the factors that we have had to consider in developing community based services in the Northern Territory.

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The parameters of planning for community services in the Northern Territory

Having stated that mere adherence to simplistic beliefs about 'community' is not enough, it is worthwhile outlining the parameters of planning for community based services in the Northern Territory.

The characteristics of the target community

These are of course a very significant planning consideration in the Northern Territory. For the NT services have to be provided for the following:

- a very young population;
- young families with more children (81 per cent of families in the NT have one or more children compared with 54 per cent for Australia);
- a very dispersed population (5 urban communities and 500 remote communities ranging in size from three or four to over 1 000 people);
- a population with a wide income range (statistically the NT has one of the highest average weekly earnings in Australia (\$337.00 (N.T.) \$303.00 (Aus). Yet the NT also has a higher proportion of its population on DSS benefits than other States);
- an ethnically mixed population (25 per cent Aboriginal in the population of the NT; 1 per cent in Australian population); 32 per cent of children under 17 are Aboriginal; 2 per cent of Darwin's population are of ethnic origin (20 per cent in Australia);
- a rapidly growing community;
- in many respects a socially dislocated community; on most social indicators available the NT provides a fairly worrying picture, whether these figures concern the crime rate; alcohol consumption; road traffic accidents; and dependency upon social security benefits.

The need to provide a high uniform quality of service irrespective of geographical dispersion

This is also another major planning consideration. The challenge to the social welfare administrator in the NT is to ensure that any statutory or universal service is equally capable of being delivered at a certain standard in Borroloola as well as Darwin.

Consequently our legislation, programs and activities must always be flexible enough to ensure this is possible.

For instance, child protection duties at an acceptable level of practice must take place irrespective of where a person lives. This is not often appreciated by community based services serving a single locality and while the person living in urban Darwin probably expects something like the range of services that he/she would get in a southern capital, the pressure to provide these often diverts resources from some very needy communities.

Uniform quality of service thus cannot be guaranteed through services administered purely by community based services alone.

The need to ensure the right service at the right time

Because of the diversity of life styles in the Northern Territory, a wide range of skills is required in order to effectively meet needs.

To illustrate, I will recount the history of a project in a remote NT

community. The community's original submission to us requested housing, access to water (there is only one tap for the whole community), a toilet block, a homemaker service and community advisor. The submission was signed by 21 members of the community. This included eleven thumb-prints, indicating a high degree of illiteracy amongst the adult population. Staff of the Community Welfare Division responded by visiting the community. To do this, they had to drive for seven hours from Tennant Creek. In dealing with the Aboriginal community, they had to be aware of a range of cultural questions so as not to inadvertently cause offence. Some of these were:

- Is the community composed of one tribal group? If not, then separate services will have to be developed for each group.
- Has anyone died recently so that the worker knows not to mention their name?
- Who are the important old people so that they can be approached first?
- Are half the community absent at ceremonies?

These are only a few of the issues that need to be taken into account, but it provides some idea of the complexity of the situation.

Negotiations took place on the ground under a tree in the hot sun. An abundance of flies was present. Negotiations were further complicated by the fact that one of the important men was under a speaking taboo and could only communicate in sign language, which he did most effectively.

Talks proceeded, and the community was clear about what they needed in order to ensure their children were adequately cared for. They needed a few simple items that are taken for granted in an urban household, and some assistance to get the project underway. Then came the negotiations with the station manager, who had been extremely anxious to get the community away from the Homestead for a number of years. Eventually, it was all sorted out, funds were approved, the project proceeded and was very successful.

That is one community, but the situation varies only in minor detail in most remote areas. It means that workers are required to have the negotiating skills of a politician, the cultural knowledge of an anthropologist, the stamina of a cross-country adventurer and the knowledge and skills of a social worker. When they get back to the office, the same workers may be required to undertake an intercountry adoption assessment, an income maintenance assessment, or to register the local child care centre.

This example shows how the Department helped create a community based service in a remote area. The point is that planning for welfare services in the Northern Territory involves a wider range of activities, skills, knowledge and professional disciplines than comparable services elsewhere. This mix can only be provided from the resources of a large organisation.

The need to develop services within the capacity of staff to handle

This applies equally to centrally organised services and community based services alike. For this reason services developed:

- should not be built around the skills of a particular professional on hand in a particular place at a particular point in time;
- should not assume a ready/constant supply of trained workers; and
- should be capable of being managed by local staff given some level of training.

Other staffing needs

To be effective welfare workers require a system of support from colleagues, access to consultancy supervision, security of tenure and some prospects of career development. All this means that the locally based organisation in a remote area will be hard put to attract the sort of staff worker it requires for an adequate length of time, unless the resources of a larger organisation which can be drawn upon can be provided.

The need for economy and efficiency

Where demand is small but the service is essential, these services are obviously better handled by a Territory-wide service than a plethora of smaller local agencies. For example, while the number of adoptions in the Northern Territory is numerically small, a high degree of skill is required in making assessments and placements. It would obviously not be economical nor efficient to deliver this service through community based agencies.

The nature of the task to be performed

There are certain tasks in statutory child welfare which involve changes in a person's legal status; changes in a child's guardianship; deprivation of a person's liberty; constraints on a person's behaviour; and investigations of illegal acts.

It seems inappropriate therefore that matters such as these, which require the authority of the State and its laws, should be provided by agencies other than those closely accountable to the State.

These are just some of the planning parameters underlying any decision to devolve services to community based services. There are many others which include the usual political considerations; pressures towards uniformity exerted by national funding programs and mechanisms, for example, Family Support Services Scheme, Grants Commission, and the capacity of the community based service to cope.

The upshot of all this is that it is quite clear that there are no formulae, no slogans and no ideologies which can provide simple answers to these questions. A fine discriminatory judgement is required in each case, and in a pluralistic community like the Northern Territory, pluralistic solutions are required.

The limitations of community development

Consequently it is worthwhile reiterating that it has been our Department's experience that community development as a method of intervention does not provide wholly adequate answers to social welfare delivery problems either.

Even if we subscribed to community development as our core technology, it is our experience that sufficient numbers of trained/competent community development workers cannot be provided for sufficiently long periods in real areas of need to be effective. I cannot see this situation changing in the foreseeable future.

Community development and its ethic of developing at a community's own pace and in a self-determined direction does not fit easily with the usual ways governments work in terms of time constraints; the need for visible results and funding mechanisms.

Community development in full bloom also seems to ignore problems of equity. If funds for the development of community based services are provided, only the communities or groups sufficiently organised to apply for them succeed — real areas of need tend to go without and great inequities result.

Community development with its reliance on the felt needs concept also tends to trap a community within its own limited horizon, irrespective of what really may be required to help solve some of its problems.

Having outlined some of the complexities underlying devolution decisions in the Northern Territory, I would like to describe the main features of NT welfare services and our approach to community based services.

Funding of community based services in the Northern Territory

By and large the Community Welfare Division has attempted to respond to the planning challenges I have outlined by providing a basic network of services which are delivered to every part of the Northern Territory, no matter how remote.

By necessity therefore these services concentrate on the basics, such as income maintenance, child protection, substitute care for children and juvenile justice programs. We are a social welfare department rather than a social work department. Our assistance is more likely to be in the form of cash than counselling and our response is more likely to be flexible than categorised. We see ourselves as a basic service available to all Northern Territory communities. The funding of community based services in the Northern Territory thus concentrates on services that we cannot provide.

Key investments are made with appropriate organisations, that is, where a service is essential a non-government agency is likely to receive 100 per cent funding on a reasonably generous basis. The funds pro-

vided are usually substantially higher than those provided by our counterparts in the other States. And unlike some of the other States, the Community Welfare Division also has a commitment to providing award wages or, where there is no award, gearing rates to the equivalent Northern Territory Public Service rate. All wages are automatically indexed, and all grants keep pace with increasing costs due to inflation.

Workers in non-government organisations in southern States are frequently surprised when they are told by workers from organisations in the Northern Territory about rates of pay and conditions of staff of community based organisations funded by the Community Welfare Division (e.g. Darwin Youth Refuge).

However, we also have to ensure that questions of equity are addressed and that more sophisticated urban communities do not receive a disproportionate share of resources by virtue of the limitations of the submission model of funding. To overcome these limitations, the Division has implemented a policy of *selective development*, and this has been seen most markedly in the Family Support Services Scheme.

Remote communities received no funds during the pilot phase of the scheme. However, they are now receiving 25 per cent of the funds under the extended scheme. In recognition of the fact that Aboriginal communities are, by virtually any criteria you may choose to use, in greatest need, 80 per cent of the funds available under the extended scheme are committed to Aboriginal communities and organisations. Forty-five per cent went to Aboriginal organisations and communities under the pilot phase.

The range of projects funded by the Community Welfare Division reflects the diversity of needs in the Northern Territory. Grants range in size from \$500 to assist a small self-help project to in excess of \$150 000 for organisations providing residential care for children. The project types range from those meeting basic needs such as the hygiene and nutrition needs of children to those meeting higher-order needs by way of counselling, parent effectiveness, training, etc. Where organisations have demonstrated expertise in particular areas, the Division makes a substantial investment in their development by way of grants and subsidies, in addition to providing properties where this is warranted.

Since self-government, the Northern Territory Government has written off loans in excess of \$3 000 000 to various organisations providing welfare services, and at the present time services ranging from child care centres to emergency accommodation services for women are using Divisional properties worth in excess of a million dollars.

Community involvement in and influence over activities of the Community Welfare Division occurs in three major ways. Firstly through widespread community consultation processes, such as those that were used with the Juvenile Justice Bill and Community Welfare Bill. There have also been a number of enquiries and research projects since self-government which have encouraged community input including the welfare enquiry and major research exercises on the aged, handicapped and those presently being finalised on domestic violence and the construction of the Darwin Juvenile Detention Centre.

Advisory committees also have substantial input into the policy and modus operandi of the Division in the areas of child protection and under the new legislation for juvenile justice as well. Some services such as the Disabled Persons Bureau and the proposed Children's Service Bureau are the result of community demand for easily accessible advisory bodies. The Division has also funded and assisted community groups to organise conferences and seminars on specific issues.

To some extent, however, the need for a wide range of advisory committees is mitigated by the ease by which Territory residents have access to local members and Ministers. Electorate sizes in the NT are significantly smaller than those in the southern States, and it has been our experience that people make extensive use of the local members to make suggestions, air grievances and seek redress. This direct feedback on particular programs or needs obviously is a significant factor in any planning of Welfare services in the Northern Territory.

By and large, therefore, the community based services in the Northern Territory which attract funding are those which:

- have demonstrated expertise in a particular area of need;
- perform services which otherwise the government would have to perform;
- aim at life-enrichment activities beyond the scope of the more basic services provided by government;
- address the needs of a particular area or group which government cannot do effectively;
- aim at developing an infrastructure of voluntary agencies in the Northern Territory.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore I feel that we as a Department have come a long way since our inception in 1978. We have experimented with community development and its reliance on community based services, but through experience have developed a better appreciation of the different roles which centrally organised and community based services play.

Both types of services are necessary, but it is important to determine which types of services are best delivered by each mode of service delivery. A flag-waving approach to this decision making often obscures the real factors which need to be considered, and I hope that my paper today has helped highlight some of those factors.

The development of a 'planning model' to cater for remote areas which have the greatest need

ADELE DUANE*

The Children's Services Program administered by the Office of Child Care within the Department of Social Security funds a network of services from early childhood care services to services for adolescents, for school-aged children and for families.

To date allocation of funds for children's services have been made on the basis of submission from local groups. This arrangement tends to favour the articulate and those with the resources to devote to submission writing and has led to an inequitable distribution of services.

The Office of Child Care is now developing a more pro-active approach towards the development and funding of needed services. The development of a 'planning model' will allow those areas of greatest need to be identified and would allow those affected by child care services to participate in the planning process on an equitable basis. However, applications will continue to be welcomed from sponsors wishing to submit projects for consideration.

The Children's Services Program in the Northern Territory has in the past concentrated its emphasis on the main population centres, but the areas of expected greatest need are now located in the more remote areas. However, the objective identification of needs in respect of all remote areas, considering the travel time involved, the unique situations expected to arise and the need to develop effective management committees in those areas will place considerable extra commitments on the present staff of the Subsidies Section in the Northern Territory who are responsible for funding four subsidies programs.

* Office of Child Care, Department of Social Security; responsible for the development of childcare services, Northern Territory

The Northern Territory office considers that the most appropriate approach to the 'planning model' proposal in the Territory would be the identification and centralisation of all relevant data base information from relevant State government and local government services, community organisations, ABS and from our own departmental sources; and, consultation with government Departments, local government services and community based organisations to interpret the available data and identify any other needs that may not be apparent. This stage of the process would also include input from relevant sources in remote areas such as community welfare district officers, Aboriginal liaison officers, Aboriginal service organisations, community health representatives and education officers.

The terms of reference of the consultative process should include:

- The aims and objectives of the planning process;
- The role of the Department of Social Security;
- The types of services that would be eligible for funding consideration;
- The type of data information required to ensure usability of information;
- The need for data bases to be appropriately recorded and indexed to ensure their usability by all participants and to enable efficient extraction of data;
- The identification of complementary resources in the community to ensure that localised information is included in the information gathering;
- The assessment of existing funded services to ascertain whether they are meeting local needs and whether their resources are being used effectively. If not could they meet the newly recognised needs;
- The identification of each phase of the process and the development of appropriate time-frames for each phase to ensure objective co-ordination;
- The maintenance of an appropriate review system to ensure that the information compiled and the 'informed' discussions made are regularly updated to take into account any change in circumstances and policy.

The planning model proposal has been supported by three recent developments in the Northern Territory.

- the decision by the Northern Territory Department of Community Development to develop a five-year plan in respect of the provisions of children's services;
- the decentralisation of Department of Social Security subsidy programs to Alice Springs by the creation of a project officer's position in the Alice Springs regional office; and,
- the creation of a further project officer position in Darwin.

Remote communities have received minimal funds under the Children's Services Program in the past because the funding guidelines have been designed to meet the needs of urban communities.

One innovative proposal under the Children's Services Program has been the Remote Areas Funding Package. In 1980 the Northern Territory Consultative Committee on Social Welfare (a committee appointed by the Minister of Social Security to advise him on matters relating to the administration of the Department in the Northern Territory), proposed a Remote Areas Funding Package to ensure some of the funds available nationally under the Children's Services Program were directed to remote communities.

The Committee worked from one basic premise, that children and families in remote areas have a need for a comprehensive range of services and therefore should have the same entitlement to have their needs met as families in urban areas.

The Committee recognised basic differences that exist in remote communities which have hindered the ready provision of children's services.

Firstly, the collective need for a service is quite meagre compared with the aggregate need often present in urban areas. The Committee contends that need should not be synonymous with large numbers, and a more individualistic approach should be taken in assessing needs in remote areas.

Another difference is the almost total absence of trained and experienced persons who are able to play a developmental role in the establishment of services in remote communities.

A third difference is the lack of physical facilities which can result in good utilisation of available buildings. It also results in wide participation and good representation in activities by all sections of the community.

In May of this year the Remote Areas Funding Package was approved by the Commonwealth government through the Office of Child Care and the Northern Territory government through the Community Welfare Division of the Department of Community Development. Each Department has contributed \$20 000 for a one-year pilot program to provide funds to remote communities to enable them to provide facilities and/or services designed to promote the healthy development of their children.

The package is to be administered jointly by the Department of Social Security and the Community Welfare Branch and a project team of staff from these two Departments will have the major responsibility for development, implementation and evaluation of the project.

For the pilot period all projects will be selected in the Katherine region because of the resource structures that already exist and the wide cross-section of communities available.

With the money available it may be appropriate to consider up to five communities, depending on the project team's capacity to provide support; the package does, however, allow for allocation of money for 'on site support'.

As the program is designed for remote and not just Aboriginal communities, at least one of the projects may be located in a predominantly European community. To date, project officers have made one visit to

the Katherine area to inform government departments, Aboriginal service groups and community organisations of the funding package.

At this stage communities to be funded have not yet been identified. This will be done over the next two months.

Changing families — Aboriginal child care

LORRAINE RANDALL*

We would first like to introduce our session in the Aboriginal way and begin in song form.

This is an Aboriginal song that relates to the listener the Aboriginal people's first contact with an Aboriginal Child Care Centre. This was in an Institution in Alice Springs called 'The Bungalow'. Aboriginal children were placed there after separation from their families. The song we would like to share with you is called 'My Brown Skin Baby'.

Brown-skin baby

- 1 As a young preacher I used to ride
My quiet pony round the country side,
In the native camp I'll never forget
A young black mother, her cheeks all wet.

Chorus: Ya-wee, ya-wee,
My brown-skin baby they take 'em away

- 2 Between her sobs I heard her say
'Police been take 'em my baby away,
From white man boss that baby I had —
Why he let 'em take baby away?'

Chorus

- 3 To a children's home a baby came
With new clothes on and a new name.
Day and night he would always say,
'Mummy, mummy, why they take me away?'

Chorus

- 4 The child grew up and had to go,
From the mission home that he loved so.
To find his mother he tried in vain
Upon this earth they never met again.

Chorus

By Bob Randall

Now we have set the feeling for the session on changing families, and specifically Aboriginal child care, I felt it essential to begin from our experiences, from what we see as the beginning of child care outside of the family unit. So I will first define what I see as an Aboriginal person.

I see an Aboriginal person as being one who identifies as such and is identified in the community in which he lives as being Aboriginal. In discussing Aboriginal child care it is essential to first look at traditional Aboriginal family life and, as I am doing this, I am specifically concerned with the Arnhem Land region of the Northern Territory and Mornington Island area of Queensland. It is in these areas that a form of child care has taken place for some 200 years, whereupon it was the responsibility for an aunt or uncle to 'grow up' the child of their sister or brother. It is a belief amongst Aboriginal people in these areas that because an aunt or uncle are not too emotionally involved with the child of their sister or brother, they are able to make the best decisions for his educational needs and the future role of the child in becoming a responsible member of the Aboriginal family group. The terminology of 'growing up a child' is, in my opinion, demonstrative of a form of child care. The responsibility of the aunt or uncle was to teach the child the role of a woman or man, their marriage laws and religion.

One of the many factors causing a breakdown in this traditional form of child rearing was when children were born from a mixed parentage, that is to say, when specifically in the southern region of the Northern Territory the number of half-caste children was increasing and it was thought by the government at the time that it was in the best interest of the children to remove them from their natural mother and place them in care. It was also evident at this time that there was an expectation by Aboriginal people in these communities that, though these children were being born, the European person could become part of the family, accepting his responsibilities in caring for the child and parents of the mother. This reciprocal form of relationship responsibility did not occur.

Therefore, in the southern region of the Northern Territory, in my opinion, one of the first recognised institutions for child care was established. This was called 'The Bungalow' and is today known as the 'Old Telegraph Station'. It was here a distribution point for mixed-blood children became operational, where it was the opinion of the time that —

Lighter skinned children were sent down south and darker skinned children were sent up to Missions in the North of Australia.

At this institution the terminology of 'coloured children' developed, and the mental breakdown of positive attitudes to one's Aboriginality became apparent. The expression of 'bush tucker' was coined, and the use of Aboriginal languages was not allowed. Up to this time at the earliest stages of colonisation, there were something like 600 recorded Aboriginal dialects spoken and approximately 15 dialects being spoken in the areas from which these children were taken. It was also a belief (policy) of the time that by forgetting the traditional way of life, these children would have an opportunity of becoming 'more human' and assimilating into the wider Australian community. Other types of children placed in this Institution were those who had been born as twins, where the other twin had died or had been killed by the family, and the remaining twin was taken to 'The Bungalow'. There were some children who had been born from the wrong skin group marriages, and so were found abandoned, as this type of relationship still was not accepted by the total Aboriginal family group.

Once the collection point was established, these children were sent to Missions at the Top End of the Territory. It was here that the girls were taught to become good domestics and for the boys to become stockmen. It was also apparent that not only separation from the mother and father occurred, but when siblings were collected they could also be separated, with the brother going to perhaps the Catholic Mission while the sister would be brought up on the Methodist Mission. The Christian religion and philosophies were taught, while Aboriginal traditional culture, its language complex, its law and social system, were forgotten, and negative feelings towards being Aboriginal became widespread. As the effect of this separation process was made apparent to the general community, this practice was later stopped, and as the children on the settlements became mature, they moved on into Darwin. Some began the process of trying to find their families, while others became alienated in the wider Darwin community, forming close-knit groups with others who had shared the same separational experience at an earlier stage in their lives (ex-Croker Island group).

In summary, when discussing 'Aboriginal child care' one has to look at the total Australian society and it is on this point that I wish to finalise this paper, adding a number of general points for you to consider, in particular these quotations:

No matter how whites attempt to help, the indigenous people of Australia will always be emotionally, spiritually and culturally discarded, unless they themselves are allowed to make their own decisions within their own political, social and cultural settings.

We feel it is important that Aboriginal traditional culture has priority over English taught in our schools, so our people will not lose the old culture.

(Marika Yirrkala)

We want an Aboriginal man to become Superintendent and white Superintendents have to come under the Aboriginal Superintendent . . . we want the white people to do what we tell them, because they've gone too far with

the white man's law, so we want to start Aboriginal laws . . . now we are starting to have our power back to help ourselves.

(Pareroultja, Hermansburg)

I quoted this series of comments to point out some of the basic assumptions that have characterised the past administrators and Aborigines. 'Our attitudes have always involved a physical, spiritual or cultural imperialism', as Biscup put it. Compare this with the above quotations — all these people seem to be saying the same thing.

I don't know if there has ever before been such widespread awareness of the Aborigines' situation amongst both Aborigines and sections of the non-Aboriginal population. Maybe political gains for various groups within society come in cycles. Whatever the case, the present time is one of rapid conscienciation (in Paulo Freire's terms) of the Aboriginal people. Many are looking for change, are aware that we do not have freedom in this country to be dignified Aborigines, that we are oppressed by the system and by the attitudes of people around us. In the words of one of my husband's songs —

Oh let me loose, get off from me
and leave me as I am
For my back is bended and low
I try to stand
With this load
That you've put upon me
Just get off now
and let me walk alone.

You have taken all I have
and all I ever want to be
All I ask is for my will to be mine
You have taken my wife and my children too
Oh please let me keep my spirit with me.

Summary

The economic system makes redundant values and institutions of traditional life and has failed to support the Aboriginal family as a viable, dignified economic unit. The social system has devalued traditional knowledge and values. A central problem is that Aboriginal society has challenged some of the concomitants to western capitalism — it challenges materialism, consumerism, the personal gain ethics. It challenges us to look at the dehumanising effects of past social welfare policies.

How can we tackle the task of humanising society to make it a place where Aborigines (amongst many others) can feel at home? Aborigines can see clearly now that it has always been they who have been expected to change, but society must change for man, not man for society — a

familiar cry among the young these days. The institutions of our society need to make room for different values: they need to explore means of involving the people in active pursuit of their own goals.

It is here I believe strongly that Aboriginal people should be involved in policy formation, operation of child care centres, in identifying controversial issues for child care delivery. When listening to Deborah Brennan's paper presented here today I acknowledged all the issues she raised as being important, but I feel as an Aboriginal person involved in child care that we as a people have so many other issues of concern and that child care, I believe, is the responsibility of the family group; that governmental funding bodies should support the family in its attempt to provide the type of child care that is relevant in their communities for their children in the way they desire.

To the other paper presented on 'Localisation of Services' by Frank Maas, I again felt it did not identify with or highlight issues relevant to the Northern Territory, as I saw it, but feel with any further conferences to be held in the Northern Territory that issues relating to what is happening here would be more appropriate to both the Institute of Family Studies and participants at the conference.

We started our session with a song and now we would like to complete it the same way . . . 'Who can hop like a Kangaroo' — a song which we have played numerous times to children in child care centres and one which we believe the children relate to.

Who can hop like a kangaroo

- 1 Who can hop like a Kangaroo,
It can be me
And it can be you,
Who can hop like a Kangaroo,
It can be me,
And it can be you.

Chorus

Hop, Hop like a Kangaroo,
Hop, Hop Hop, like a Kangaroo,

- 2 Who can walk like a Big Emu,
It can be me
And it can be you,
(repeat above three lines)

Chorus

Walk, Walk like a Big Emu,
Walk, Walk, Walk like a Big Emu,

- 3 Who can howl like the red Dingo,
It can be me
And it can be you,
(repeat again above lines.)

Chorus: HAR OOO, ooo, like the red Dingo.
HAR OOO, ooo, like the red Dingo.

Community management: rhetoric and reality

MARGOT SIMPSON*

As has been expressed today by many people in different ways, the move to community based service provision is more about power and economics than about meeting the needs of individual family members. The community based service model, as currently implemented, gives the community the responsibility for service provision and management, while leaving the government with the power of policy-making and resource allocation.

Instead of a system of checks and balances being set up whereby the community (through user-controlled agencies) and the government (through its bureaucrats) hold equal power in decision-making, the reality is that the government has total power of survival and policy direction over community groups. Community groups are thus akin to prostitutes; they must make themselves attractive to the man with the money (whatever his whims may be) and provide the service he chooses in the manner he dictates. The alternative is that he takes his money elsewhere. The example of the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) given in Barbara Lane's paper is a perfect illustration of this.

This morning we heard how the Aboriginal child care women, through years of fighting and lobbying, have been able to acquire funding for planning and research for services provided the way Aboriginal people want them. We have also heard of the success of Community Child Care in New South Wales and Victoria in presenting an effective lobbying voice on behalf of community services. My question to you this afternoon is how much effort went into fighting for services that could have

* Lecturer in Sociology, Darwin Community College, Northern Territory

gone into providing those same services. How many hours of volunteer female labour have been wasted in fighting the bureaucratic and government maze?

Adele Duane told us this morning of the high sounding ideals of the Office of Child Care with regard to community consultation. The Office of Child Care is going to collect data; the Office of Child Care is going to talk to the community; the Office of Child Care is going to look at its priorities, and the Office of Child Care, I am quite sure, will then make all the decisions (under ministerial directions of course). Why is all this being done at a bureaucratic level and not at a community level? If the needs in the Northern Territory are so diverse *why* isn't the community funded to employ its own research, coordination and policy people who are responsible to the community and the government? The recently formed NT Women's Advisory Council appears to be a good example of how a wide range of community interests can be brought together. If such a group were given power over policy and resource allocation in the areas it represents it would be an excellent model.

If community based service provision isn't about power and government allocating scarce resources for political reasons, why isn't the government promoting community coordination, research and self-evaluation; not evaluation by the government on its criteria of services, but evaluation by the community on its own criteria?

For many years I have been involved with Darwin Family Centres (DFC), a community based organisation that tried within strict limits of funds, resources, space and time to provide research, coordination, evaluation and education to its member services. This organisation has never been able to obtain funds to either support a paid coordinator for the existing services or to turn itself into a Community Child Care type support agency for the Northern Territory.

I will outline the benefits that DFC members saw in having a coordinator and some of the offshoot benefits of this position for the community. Darwin Family Centres is a child care family support organisation consisting of five child care centres, three Family Day Care schemes, a Fun Bus (mobile pre-school unit which provides playgroups in isolated areas) and a family advisor (who provides parent education and counselling to families in crisis). The organisation is administered by a voluntary committee consisting of user representatives along with some staff and community representatives, including one from Darwin Toy Library. This committee, known as Central Executive employed, until August this year, a coordinator to run the day-to-day operations of the organisation on their behalf. The wages of the coordinator and her part-time secretary were raised by an administration levy paid by the centres and from a fee for service paid by Family Day Care.

This organisational model was largely an historical accident — like Topsy it just grew — but once grown the participating services saw a number of benefits in the structure. Firstly, services could be mutually supportive. When committees, wages or solutions couldn't be found, services traded ideas, loans and volunteers. Secondly, a paid administrative staff provided a focal point, a means of stability and a continuity

of information. Thirdly, coordination helped ensure that services co-operated in meeting a wide range of community needs, thus avoiding duplication and allowing better use of scarce resources. Fourth, professional support and guidance was available to those immersed in the daily battle of service provision. This did much to break down isolation (it is interesting to note here that the funding of the Family Advisor, Fun Bus and Family Day Care were partly allocated because of the availability of this support — not to mention the time of the coordinator to write the continual submissions to have these services funded and refunded). Fifth, the employment of a coordinator offered the organisation the services of someone freed from the constant demands of services provision who could be involved in planning and evaluating both new and existing services. The coordinator could serve as an advocate for children, families and the organisation itself. This person could further perform research on behalf of the organisation and thus serve to educate staff, parents and volunteers on matters of concern. Sixth, the mutual support within DFC meant that services such as Fun Bus, Family Advisor and some centres which were unable to attract and maintain local administrative support were able to survive to provide much needed services.

Darwin Family Centres has a six-point philosophy:

- To meet the social, emotional and cognitive needs of the developing child.
- To help and to support parents in all aspects of child rearing.
- To help parents develop their own potential through participation in a community based organisation.
- To cater for a variety of needs, including those expressed in the Child Care Act of 1971, by providing a variety of day care and family support services.
- To promote the sharing of resources between the centres and the community.
- To encourage the personal development of staff members through team work and participation in all aspects of centre management and operation.

This philosophy committed Darwin Family Centres and their coordinator to work not only on their own behalf but on behalf of all children and families.

A survey of past coordinators reveals the types of work they were doing on behalf of the community in general: they served as executive members of NTCOSS, and represented families and children in Darwin by

- attending Conferences such as the Family Policy Conference held by Social Welfare Ministers in 1980, and by
- giving input into government draft legislation, seminars and committees. Included are Children Services Sub-committee of the N.T. Consultative Committee on Social Welfare for the Federal Department of Social Security

- addressing seminars such as those run by the Institute of Family Studies
- addressing a wide range of community groups on specific issues related to children, families and child care
- responding to papers and questions from ACOSS and other research bodies.

They also served by providing the main source of lobbying activity such as when the Spender Report threatened the finances of community based child care centres generally.

They organised and ran Children's Week for three consecutive years.

They oversaw the preparation and distribution of Happenings, a Territory-wide magazine on children and families.

They served as a referral, support and contact source for new services, for example, Alice Springs Family Day Care, Jabiru Child Care Centre, City Family Centres, and Humpty Doo Child Care Centre.

They served as a referral, support and information source for existing services that did not finance their own coordinator.

They negotiated the NT Child Care Industry Award on behalf of community based child care services.

They lobbied for the writing and setting up of, and teaching in, child care training courses, e.g. You and Your Under Five, a 10 week basic child care course started in 1981 (still in operation), the Certificate of Child Care Studies due to commence at Darwin Community College in 1984 largely due to the long-term lobbying efforts and hard work of a number of DFC coordinators. (In fact four of the people on the course advisory committee who wrote the course were ex-DFC coordinators.)

The value of having the DFC coordinator perform these functions, apart from the fact that there was no one else to do them, was that the coordinator was responsible directly to the community, admittedly a small section of the community, as the fees needed from member services to support the coordinator excluded a lot of services from participating. As a paid representative of DFC, she was a link between the community and the government sector. She was an ongoing source of knowledge about both community needs and government policy and practice. As such, she was in a position to advocate on behalf of families and children, to educate the community and voluntary sector on new initiatives and to advise services on the needs and operations of each other. She provided a consistent source of information and education for community groups and government alike. By so doing she was able (within her vast limitations of time, money and space) to break down isolation both between services and between the NT and southern States. She was also able to speak authoritatively on behalf of a large number of children and families in the Top End.

DFC was never able to obtain funding for its administrative operations. In fact it attracted constant criticism from the funding bodies for paying the wages of administrative staff from money that could have been used for service provision. That a huge array of service users had laboured for over 10 years using their own homes, cars and telephones

(not to mention time) to build up a centralised support body that they believed to be vitally necessary was seen as less relevant by governments than the fact that the management structure of the organisation didn't fit in with current policy guidelines. No less than seven submissions have been put for funds to help relieve the financial burden of member services in supporting the coordination function. These submissions have included the suggestion of widening the community base of the organisation and even changing its function to that which would suit a wider range of services. Each submission has attempted to justify the organisation in terms of the current government's policy. None were successful.

Although a number of schemes in Central Australia have been able to secure funding for single service coordinators, DFC was never able to attract funds for one coordinator for 10 services. The argument continually advanced by the Office of Child Care was that single service coordinators were involved in service provision, the inference always being that as DFC's coordinator wasn't actually out there providing on-the-ground services she wasn't doing anything useful. This is akin to saying general managers in private enterprise and heads of government departments aren't necessary because they aren't providing services. The fate of these people tends, however, to be big offices and high salaries, which would imply their services are in fact valued.

The end result of this lack of government support for DFC's coordination efforts has been the relinquishing of the coordinator position and the subsequent disintegration of DFC into a number of loosely linked, unsupported services. This will leave the Fun Bus coordinator and Family Advisor without a built-in source of professional support and will leave services fully extended in service provision without back up or advocacy. It will also mean that evaluation (if it takes place at all) will be haphazard and is unlikely to be followed through. The demise of DFC's coordination function leaves DFC's services in the inevitable position of changing the nappies and mopping up the crises in a disunited and unassisted fashion; while the government is strengthened in its position to dictate to the community what its needs should be.

My purpose here today has not been to suggest that any one organisation should receive funding for a particular position. What I have attempted to do is show that there is a need for coordination, research and evaluation of community based services at a community level. I have also tried to show that to date organisations in the Northern Territory that have tried to provide these services have found no joy.

There needs to be an awareness at government level that people fully involved in service provision have a right to support and a real input into government policy, but that they need paid administrative support staff to help them do it. These administrative staff should be responsible directly to the community and only indirectly to the government. This of course begs the question of whether the government is committed to community control, or whether it sees strong, well coordinated community service as a threat to its entrenched power base.

Family breakdown: an opportunity for change

BARBARA LANE*

There are five main questions raised and discussed in this paper:

- Is family breakdown necessarily negative?
- Are the goals of the Family Service Support Scheme (FSSS) founded on child welfare (a child rescuing approach) or on self-determination for children (a children's rights approach)?
- Could services for the family be directed at restructuring the family and redressing its most negative characteristics by channelling funds into education programs, neighbourhood centres and women's centres?
- Does the political ideology of the Northern Territory government preclude the development of alternative models of family services?
- Where are the children? If this conference is focusing on families and children, why are the children not speaking here today?

These questions are based on two basic assumptions. The first is that the family, considering its history of paternalistic despotism, its potential for violence, and its ability to negate individualism and enhance sex role stereotyping, may not, in its nuclear form, be the most appropriate network for support of children in Australia today. This assumption seems to be confirmed by the high rate of marriage breakdown due to the stress placed on the traditional model (see Maas, 1983: 1). The second assumption is that children need care and affection from a psychological parent or parents, but they also need an appreciation of

themselves as individuals; therefore, parental power must move from power by coercion toward a more rational base.

The focus of the paper

The extended Family Services Support Scheme in the Northern Territory is primarily directed toward funding Aboriginal community services. I do not believe I am the appropriate person to evaluate these projects. The Aboriginal people present today are the ones that need to determine if these programs are successful. I do, however, wish to state that if the projects reflect the unique characteristics which were listed in the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' submission then I believe the money was well spent. These characteristics were that the scheme would not be intrusive or destructive to *Aboriginal family networks*, would use *Aboriginal staff and systems*, would be developed out of *expressed needs of the Aboriginal people*, and would represent a preventative and holistic approach (CAAC: 7-8).

The focus of this paper is the urban European context and, therefore, raises different issues from those in Aboriginal communities. The family is a difficult concept to define (see Jim Alexander, 1983: chapter 1); yet this paper is critical of families. The criticisms are directed at the patriarchal dominated two-parent family, and the one-parent family where the patriarchal dominance is transferred from the male head of the household to the single parent, still at the cost of self-determination and freedom from violence for the children. I would like to emphasise at this time that I am not criticising all Australian family types. There are families with supportive structures where mutual respect exists. My concern with these families is that we will abuse their supportiveness and overburden them to the point of destruction.

Is family breakdown necessarily negative?

In Jim Alexander's paper, 'Service to Families' he states that the Family Services Support Scheme's bold objective is 'finding new ways to prevent the breakdown of families and institutionalisation of children . . .' and that 'the Scheme has not progressed very far towards achieving its goals.' (1983: 1.) I would like to comment on both the objective and its failure to achieve its stated goals.

There are two underlying assumptions implied in the objective:

- family breakdown leads to institutionalisation, and
- family breakdown and institutionalisation are negative.

It is not clear how family breakdown is defined. However, I do not believe that family breakdown such as divorce and separation necessarily leads to institutionalisation of children, nor do I believe that family

breakdown is, of necessity, negative. I *do* agree that institutionalisation is negative. The proviso here is that de-institutionalisation does not mean, for example, placing a handicapped child in the home to be solely supported by the family (read 'the non-working mother'). I would also question whether the Scheme was really meant to have much impact, given the meagre allocation of funds and the political ideology of the government of the day which developed this Scheme.

We recognise the negative impact of women's rights in a patriarchal structured family and we frequently recognise the benefits to women who divorce themselves from that family; but do we share the same view on children? Women and children have been closely linked in the subordination to the patriarchal family model. Are children's needs best served by a two-parent family which encourages male dominance at the expense of individualisation of the rest of the family? Children need parents, but family breakdown implies the separation of natural parents and their children. According to Bettelheim:

The lives of untold children are destroyed because in legal thinking biological and legal parenthood takes precedence over that psychological parenthood which alone promotes the child's emotional health and with it also his physical and intellectual well-being. (As quoted in Goldstein, 1973: cover page)

So the question becomes an issue of what kind of family breakdown we are trying to prevent. If violence is the nature of many Australian families, and according to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (1977: 138) it is; and if we agree with Peter d'Abbs (1983), who undertook research in domestic violence in Darwin, that the family is potentially the most violent institution in our society, why are we trying to prevent family breakdown? It would appear that the family as an institution needs to be broken down in order that it can be restructured along more adequate lines.

The family is the last stronghold of natural order to come under public scrutiny (Yeatman, 1979: 3). It is under public scrutiny because it is not functioning. This conference is a recognition of that fact. It is also an opportunity to look at alternatives to the traditional nuclear patriarchal family: a family structure which results in the subordination of both women and children, and indeed, the frustration of men.

The problem of family breakdown was considered in an editorial written this week for the *Northern Territory News* (8 October 1983: 7) by Frank Alcorta. While looking forward to the changing status of women he stated:

... the upheaval has taken women out of their traditional roles and has put them in the work place to compete with men. It has shaken the long cherished values and has challenged the very foundation of family life.

Family life has been built on a foundation of the patriarchal rule of the father; therefore, the emancipation of women and children will certainly shake the foundations of the cherished patriarchal dominance.

The real issue, Alcorta goes on to say, is the children:

The question of the children is not addressed in any detail by document [The U.N. Resolution on Women] . . . who looks after the kids of working mothers and who pays for their care?

The answer to this question seems obvious unless your eyes have been closed to the dynamics of the 'ideal' patriarchal family. Within a two-parent family, there are two adults. This means two people who can possibly invest in equal part-time care of the children while engaging in part-time work as well as shared domestic responsibilities. If both parents work full-time, there are two wages to support child care. There is even the possibility of State support of child care. In the not so Utopian one-parent family perhaps the State would need to grant more funding. Perhaps community networks could be strengthened through neighbourhood centres. Mr Alcorta may very well be looking forward to shared child care, State support of child care, shared financial resources and shared domestic duties. Fortunately for Mr Alcorta, both of his children have grown up.

Children's rights or child welfare

I would like to raise the question of the focus of the intervention in the family. Is that focus still based on *rescuing* children? In the Northern Territory we have made a dramatic effort to reduce the number of children in care of the Division of Welfare. According to stated policy, we no longer rescue children by institutionalising them (at least not in the child welfare area — handicapped children are another issue completely). But are we now transferring the problem by rescuing the family to care for the child? There still seems to be a preponderance of rescuers and very few advocates of children's rights. There needs to be a recognition that children's rights may be in conflict with parents' rights, particularly if we intend to provide child welfare through the family.

It is not my intention to advocate children's rights over parents' rights but 'to say a child's on-going relationship with a specific adult, the psychological parent, must not be interrupted is also to say that this adult's rights are protected against intrusion by the State on behalf of the other adults'. (Goldstein, 1973: 105-6)

The question of children's rights is usually swept under the table or kicked out of the door. However it does deserve to be looked at and acted upon if our primary aim for supporting families is to provide better care for children. In the Northern Territory we do not usually find ourselves in debate over children's rights. We usually do not discuss it. A submission sent to the NT Board of Inquiry 'Relating to a Children's Bill of Rights' (Lane, 1978) for incorporation into the re-drafting of the Child Welfare Act received minimal mention. It was seen as an issue for consideration in the future. The draft Community Welfare Bill (1983) put

forward to replace the present Child Welfare Act does not mention children's rights. In fact it completely omits rights of children as well as the duties of the Director of Welfare. The Bill overemphasises the powers of the Minister without mentioning the powers of the Director. This leads me to another issue which I will come back to in a moment, and this is the intervention of politics in welfare.

Methods of service provision

The third point I wish to raise is in answer to the question asked by the Institute of Family Studies on what are the best ways of providing services to families and their members.

As Jim Alexander noted, homemaker services, financial counselling and marital counselling, although valid, if placed within an ideology of maintenance of the family may well be an approach which assists women to cope within the home environment without regard to the negativity of that environment (1983: 31-2). We were also informed in Frank Maas' paper that families prefer services which are available through contexts 'with which they are familiar, such as health centres, schools and clubs' (1983: 3).

Schools in the past have certainly not represented a vehicle for challenging the status quo of the non-egalitarian family. Yet it is a potential vehicle for providing education in the broadest context. According to one youth worker in Darwin, many male adolescents know no real outlet for their aggression and confusion beside violence. A focus beginning in the elementary schools on a moral education program which emphasises development of understanding self and others, communication skills and understanding the validity of feelings, may very well provide an alternative to violence and enhance future families as well as our present less than adequate system. An attack on sex roles especially in the area of child care and domestic responsibilities may very well develop future Australians who do not define women as 'God's Police' and males as the breadwinner.

Development of neighbourhood based centres as a focal point for services could alleviate the personalisation of the problem in the home and may very well take stress off the nuclear family and place it back in the community where it originally rested. A service model based on the Family Centre Project (described in Liffman, 1978) which challenges casework approaches, focuses on the father as well as the mother and children, provides a guaranteed minimum income, and attempts to transfer power to the families away from the agency, is an alternative program which I would favour.

However the emphasis of the program was that money came first. This is clearly demonstrated by the stated aim of the project which was to show that 'the problem with the poor is that they lack money' (Liffman, 1978:33).

Women's centres which focus on developing women's potential and directing the energies of women away from their anxiety over their failure to live up to the televised version of the family ideal is another alternative. A women's centre is political because the struggle for women's rights is a power struggle. Yet it is also a place where women can gain freedom from societally imposed roles and develop the freedom to make choices about what they wish to do. To follow a traditional role is as valid a choice as following a non-traditional role, as long as that selection is a matter of choice.

Another aspect of service delivery is to look at family techniques in the field of welfare. It is necessary to look at the family as a unit, but not as an ideal to be propped up if it is destructive. Rather, the family is seen as a clustering of individuals who influence each other yet may have conflicting needs and desires.

The FSS Scheme's budget is inadequate to provide this level of intervention and, in addition, these monies are channelled through the Northern Territory government. This leads to the fourth question: Does the political ideology of the Northern Territory government preclude the development of alternative models of family services?

The politics of welfare

It may be that the intervention of the political ideology of the Government in welfare is more visible in the Northern Territory, and that is why the intervention is so noticeable.

According to the then Minister for Community Welfare, the lack of funding for the Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) was based on the political activity of the organisation. They were being critical of the government's bulldozing of houses and therefore were not funded. One non-government agency who protested about the cuts to NTCOSS was asked if they would like their own funding cut to support NTCOSS. Agency directors have been told that if they are political (in the Northern Territory this means criticising or commenting negatively on government issues) they will not receive future funding.

The dominant ideology of the Northern Territory government was most clearly expressed by the then Minister for Community Development at a 1981 meeting on child care in which he stated his preference in child care ratios to be one to one: a mum at home with her child. This anti-collectivist residual model of welfare sees the family as the natural channel for welfare services. This ideology shows itself in the Health Department's television promotion on head lice 'It's the Parents' Responsibility', to control of children by changing the title of the Children's Court to the Family Matters Court as well as the total cuts of funding to the Darwin Women's Centre. It is an ideology that does not recognize the fact that the Northern Territory has a 10.8 per cent higher rate of persons participating in the labour force responsible for (any)

children under 12, and twice the percentage of single parents as compared with the Australian average.

I am not stating that political ideology should not enter into family services. This would be political naivete and a demonstration of a lack of understanding of the history and development of the welfare state. I do, however, question the extent to which this intervention is taking place in the Northern Territory. I am also concerned by the lack of alternative political manoeuvring of those of a collectivist ideology and their inability to have an influence on the development of policies.

The lack of coordination of the non-government sector and fears of lost funding if they are 'politically active' has meant this potentially valuable voice is virtually silent. The non-government sector has abdicated its responsibility to the Division of Welfare, and in the Northern Territory this has meant control to the Minister for Community Development. Lack of funding for administration and evaluation and, with the exception of domestic violence, lack of research in social welfare has meant that the focus for welfare funding has been problem specific crisis intervention excluding developmental programming, needs assessment or planning. Further research, coordination of services and discreet politicking could radically change the effectiveness of programming in the family services sector.

At the present time the political ideology of the Northern Territory does limit alternative models of children's support networks. Until we mobilise the necessary political forces in the community to look at reorienting our directions, we will continue to use monies to prop up families to cope with *their* problem. The community's responsibility to families is not recognised in a residual model of welfare. But political efforts take time and energy, a commodity social welfare workers and families do not have in abundance. The energy required for crisis intervention prohibits political action.

Who speaks for the children?

The final question I would like to raise is who is speaking at this conference for the children? Why aren't they here today? Are their needs being met in the family? Do they object to child care? Do they prefer a nuclear family, an extended family, a neighbourhood, community or State structure to meet their needs? If the FSS Scheme is directed at preventing family breakdown for the sake of the children, shouldn't the children have a voice in determining if family breakdown is negative? I believe they should.

Conclusion

I am not saying all families are negative. Jean McCaughey identified three types of families: those who were able to utilise and control resources; those who could use services but not control them; and the third group 'whose lack of self-confidence leads to . . . withdrawal into an enclosed world of damaging social isolation' (1977:126). The welfare focus tends to be on the last two groups. If you do discover a family who has an adequate system of support networks, has made a rational choice based on equality and equity regarding the responsibilities of child care and domestic duties, a place where individual opinions are nurtured and the home abounds with self and mutual respect, leave immediately! They do not need your support. They may need money, they may need information, but the child does not need to be rescued. The family unit is not destructive regardless of its structure.

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Note

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Anna Yeatman's paper 'Where are the Children Today?' to my own paper's structure and emphasis.

The Institute of Family Studies, established under the provisions of the Family Law Act 1975, commenced operation in February 1980. The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government, from which it derives its financial support. The founding Director is Dr Don Edgar. The Institute has a Board of Management of seven appointed members and a permanent staff of professional and support personnel. In addition, specialist assistants and consultants in appropriate fields are engaged to assist the Institute in its work when necessary.

Functions of the Institute

The functions of the Institute as defined by the Family Law Act 1975, are:

- to promote, by the conduct, encouragement and co-ordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia, with the object of promoting the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society; and
- to advise and assist the Attorney-General in relation to the making of grants, out of moneys available under appropriations made by the Parliament, for purposes related to the functions of the Institute and the supervising of the employment of grants so made.

The Institute's activities centre around meeting the following needs:

- research on social and economic factors affecting the well-being of families of different types in Australian society;
- development of an objective understanding of what is happening to the family in Australia, including identification of the strengths, as well as problems, of Australian families;
- dissemination of information about families and family structures to all those whose work directly affects the lives of families;
- monitoring and reporting on the impact of government policies and administrative practices on families of various types in Australia; and
- evaluation of the effects of marriage counselling, pre-marital education and other services, including those areas of the law aimed at assisting families.

Thus the objects of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.



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